

# **‘The World Has Turned Upside Down’: Migration, Social Transition and Negotiations with Difference in a Namibian Squatters’ Settlement**

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*To my nana,  
Helen Thompson  
(1912-2001)  
for her faith and support*



## **Declaration of Originality**

This thesis contains the original work of the author. The material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other University.

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## Abstract

In 1997, seven years after Namibian Independence, which ended more than 100 years of colonial rule, local municipalities in some central Namibian townships undertook the development of 'reception areas'. These reception areas became the first multi-ethnic settlements established since the partitioning of residential areas into ethnically homogenous sections under South African apartheid, and were created to secure both large numbers of recent migrants and long-term residents better access to resources and more favourable living conditions. Hakahana, the fieldsite of this study, is one such settlement and is located in the central township of Omaruru. Hakahana houses a growing number of migrants from Namibia's northern regions and former central reserve areas, as well as long-term residents of Omaruru unable to obtain permanent housing within the township.

Exploring the historical construction of 'racial', 'ethnic' and 'class-based' differences, this study begins with an examination of the varied historical practices of migration enacted and experienced by Oshiwambo-, Damara- and Otjiherero-speaking Namibians (Hakahana's and Namibia's three most populous 'ethnic groups'). It investigates shifting economic and cultural impetuses for migration in light of Namibian Independence, elucidating the importance of this form of mobility as a transitional force in the re-creation of Omaruru's social and political landscapes.

Beyond an investigation of 'race', 'ethnicity' or 'class', it poses the study of difference as a theoretical means to achieving greater understandings of the processes of identity formation undertaken by Hakahana's residents. Through the examination of memory narratives it illustrates the divergent moral visions of community created and held by Hakahana's residents and the importance of Namibia's divided past in influencing people's willingness and ability to appropriate ethnic and national identities.

Focusing on the micro-level dynamics of life in Hakahana, this study considers this newly created settlement as a living 'community' in which the transitional struggles occurring within Namibia's social and political landscapes are manifested and played out. It explicates the simultaneous morphological and social transformations involved in the relocation of the former squatters' settlement to Hakahana. And, in the same light, it examines the subsequent partitioning of Hakahana into ethnically-divided sections - a process undertaken by its residents in the time following its creation. Through an examination of these processes it illustrates the interplay between the micro, median and macro levels of Namibian society and provides an analysis of the social and political challenges of difference faced by Namibia's government and its citizens in their ongoing attempts to create 'unity in diversity'.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction: Migration, Transition and the Creation of Hakahana

Through early German colonial policy at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and South African legislation for the greater part of the 1900s, the movement of black Namibians was systematically controlled and often times prohibited. Ten years prior to Independence (which occurred in 1990) these restrictions were removed, and in the years following Namibia's liberation from over a century of colonial rule, migration to Namibia's central towns began to occur at greatly increasing rates. Devereux (1995) informs us,

'As the labour and residential control apparatus crumbled, informal settlements began to mushroom during the 1980's around...most towns of any size, a social migration which accelerated sharply after independence. The net result was a translocation of rural underemployment to expanding pools of open urban unemployment' (ibid:29).

In response to the arrival of growing number of migrants, local municipalities in towns throughout central and eastern Namibia have undertaken the creation of 'reception areas'. Hakahana, the site of my fieldwork, created in October of 1997 on the outskirts of Omaruru, is one such reception area. According to Mr. Xoagub, Deputy Officer of Omaruru's municipality, local administrations are taking steps to relocate great numbers of recent migrants from Namibia's North in order to improve awareness of who is residing where, as well as to provide Namibia's citizens with basic urban human services (such as water and sewage).

While the creation of Hakahana has helped the municipality to achieve some of its objectives in organising and governing Omaruru, the creation of Hakahana has also had other unforeseen, negative effects. For example, rather than solving the township's problems related to migration, it has encouraged additional migration which has resulted in an overburdening of the town's resources. It has also led to an observable shift in social and economic relations in Omaruru. While conducting fieldwork, the importance of increased migration and urbanisation as contributors to escalating rates of crime and unemployment was continually brought to my attention by the townspeople of Omaruru.

For the migrants themselves, the effects have been varied. For some, the freedom of movement that followed Independence has meant good fortune and a positive shift in

standard of living. For many more, however, migration has merely been an economically lateral move, or one that has placed them at even greater risk through increased economic isolation and decreased accessibility to food. For the long-term residents of Omaruru, the increased migration that has followed Independence has become an additional factor in a process of transition that has challenged the social and economic stability of a once more bounded community.

The creation and reproduction of Hakahana as an ethnoscape and a locality situated within larger local and national contexts and 'communities' is the subject of this study. Through an examination of the historical and contemporary influences over social and political dynamics in Hakahana, it explores the transformation of life within its boundaries as reflective of shifts occurring throughout a newly independent Namibia.

### **Transition and Transformation**

I first travelled to Omaruru in 1996 to work for a year as a volunteer teacher at a local NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation). At the time, Omaruru township consisted of only the 'location' and the 'town'. What is today the organised and bounded neighbourhood of Hakahana was then an amorphous cluster of squatter's homes, situated at the entrance to Ozondje, inward from the dirt road that bisected the 'location'. When I returned to Omaruru in September of 1998 to commence 15 months of anthropological fieldwork, Hakahana's creation was one of the many changes that had occurred which substantially altered the landscape of the location. Additionally, there was a newly-erected football stadium on the outskirts of Ozondje, a communal playground formed in its centre, and the road leading to the location had been paved – somehow adjoining not only two roads of tarmac at a perpendicular junction, but also creating a sense of continuity between the location and the town.

The town itself had changed as well. The newly restored BP service station, the Mexican restaurant, a few new bottle stores, convenience stores and 'cash loan' agencies, as well as an automated teller machine, were the most noticeable additions. Signs of economic development on a small-scale entrepreneurial level were everywhere. However, upon asking people about the changes that had occurred since I left, it became clear that most saw

Omaruru's economy and its social, as well as its physical development, as stagnate. I was struck by the negativity of the people with whom I spoke and the sentiments of hopelessness they expressed. As I would later find out, the life span of most of the businesses that had come about would be shorter than a year's time and the changes I assumed were progress were mostly last-chance efforts of Afrikaner families that had moved to Omaruru after drought had forced them off their farms. The employees of these farms could also be found in Omaruru victims of derived destitution.

Other hidden factors I later discovered through inquiring at local schools and health clinics were increased alcohol consumption, staggering Grade 10 failure rates (which prohibits students from proceeding towards graduation), increased incidences of HIV infection and AIDS-related deaths, and a substantial increase in unemployment. So, while Omaruru's outward appearance showed signs of economic development and integration, its society had been undergoing formidable transition on both macro and micro levels, and its social stability had been withering away.

I would also experience many of these changes first hand in the year to come. Some of these changes were dramatic and disturbing. Greatly increased incidence of crime (including my flat being burgled while I slept, and waking to gun shots in the middle of the night), and the death of friends I had known in my previous stay, were realities that contributed to my own experience of the hopelessness and uncertainty that was expressed by many of my informants. However, at the start of my fieldwork, all this was yet to be revealed and I was left to the more immediate task of understanding the lack of enthusiasm my informants displayed in light of the physical developments Omaruru had seen over the year-and-a-half I was away.

It was only after a couple of weeks of settling in, finding a place to live and getting reacquainted with the people and places in Omaruru that I thought to ask where all the squatters' homes had gone. It was then that I was first introduced to Hakahana – what would be the site of most of my future fieldwork and the place to where, at the end of 1997, all squatters located along the road to the location had been transferred.

As I had read Wade Pendleton's (1996) ethnography on life in Katutura, Windhoek's black township, the name 'Hakahana' rang familiar to me. However, I did not need to return to his book for an explanation of the link between the two locations. Hakahana's residents



were more than happy to inform me that 'Hakahana' means 'hurry up' in Otjiherero and the name was originally coined in jest for the location in Windhoek when the apartheid administration forced Owambo residents of a dilapidated 'singles' quarters' building in the heart of Windhoek, to transfer themselves to a sub-section of Katutura, on the outskirts of the city. The actions of the government were seen as unfair by the people with whom I spoke, as, to quote a Herero informant, 'their treatment of the Owambo people was as if they were cattle'.

It is no coincidence that the new squatters' settlement, or 'reception area' was given the same name. Even upon my arrival in 1998, nearly a year after the move had taken place, people recounted with bitter disdain the actions of Omaruru's municipality, in what they perceived to be their forced relocation to Hakahana. Stories of threats and bulldozers and undemocratic decision-making were common, although a few of Hakahana residents claimed this was all untrue – that the people voted to move and the municipality provided help with transport and plot allocation.

While it may be true, as Mr. Xoagub stated, that one of the main purposes behind the relocation of Omaruru's squatters' community was to provide Namibian citizen with better access to resources, there is also hope, amongst employees of the municipality, that the prime municipal land on which the squatters were formerly settled will be resold through a newly-established work-to-build savings scheme. Being that most of Hakahana's residents are either unemployed or earning a minimal subsistence income, however, the benefits of this scheme are clearly beyond their reach at this point in time. This reality did not go unnoticed, and a few informants commented to me on the transparency of the municipality's actions.

Regardless of the truth behind the municipality's intentions, what is to be ascertained from people's overwhelmingly negative recounts of unfair treatment by their local leaders, is a link in the minds of Hakahana's residents between unfair governmental policies of the apartheid administration and those of Namibia's present government. It also revealed, as I discovered through later fieldwork, a growing or, perhaps, regenerated distrust of the government to protect the interests of its people.

As I continued my fieldwork in Omaruru, the evidence was abundant that, bound up in the creation and development of Hakahana were the struggles of a young nation

transforming itself against a history of separatism and oppression. The present realities of a faltering economy, rapid urbanisation due to the surge of migration, and developing transformist hegemony were all contributing factors to the production of difference that occurred through the government's attempts to create 'community' and unite its citizens under a national identity.

### **Difference and the Production of Locality**

As much as Omaruru's town structure embodies the ideals of apartheid, with the ethnically divided 'black township' far removed from the predominantly white 'town', my initial impression of Hakahana was that it appeared to embody the spirit of 'unity in diversity', one of the mottoes of Namibia's Independence government – SWAPO. After descending through the location, through the uniform concrete houses that remain separated into neighbourhoods of ethnically homogeneous residents, and after winding around the Damara primary school past the newly constructed stadium, one stumbles into Hakahana. Wandering through the dirt streets that form a more-or-less organised grid, individuality and diversity become apparent characteristics of Hakahana's residents. From one plot to the next homes have been constructed in different styles and of different materials, ranging from cement brick houses to thatched roof huts. The various styles of houses and landscapes of the plots sit side by side in an expression of personal and ethnic distinctiveness. Everywhere one looks there is diversity with what appears to be the unity of occupying a single space.

After initially surveying more than half the households in Hakahana, however, it became apparent that the only noticeable unity found in the settlement was that provided by its boundaries, and even those were being negotiated. While there seemed to be an almost reluctant pride expressed in Hakahana as a neighbourhood to which my informants belonged, discontent about the living conditions and the neighbours one had to tolerate was abundant. Having known of the unfavourable conditions that existed in the former squatters' settlement, the difficulty there was in obtaining water, the lack of sewage facilities, and the arguments that occurred over the demarcation of space, Hakahana's neatly organised and spacious plots, its numerous water taps, and its toilet facilities, seemed a significant improvement. So why, then, were its residents so unhappy about the move?

It must first be noted that not all residents of Hakahana were displeased with the newly-created living situation. In fact, the majority of more recent migrants from Namibia's north were quite satisfied with the relocation to Hakahana. However, for many others, Hakahana's creation was greatly contested. Upon first speaking with informants from the settlement, great discontent was expressed by those who were long-term residents of Omaruru, about the disruption the move had caused to their lives and their daily routines. For these residents, the move had not only relocated them physically, but had also placed them in a more peripheral social position.

Another factor in residents' discontent concerning Hakahana, expressed to me throughout my fieldwork, was the location of plots beside and across from neighbours whose different cultural practices were regarded with great suspicion and often disgust. In the beginning of Hakahana's formation, squatters from the old settlement were required to register with the municipality and were in turn allocated a plot. This arrangement, according to Omaruru's municipality, was on a first-come-first-serve basis and, consequently, followed no conscious pattern of ethnic separation *or mixing* for that matter. Families or friends were able to occupy adjoining plots if they registered together, but otherwise, plot allocation was random.

By the time I began my research people had already started reorganising themselves into more ethnically homogeneous sections. And by the end of my fieldwork, many more had participated in plot swapping, or had petitioned the municipality to relocate them to an available plot nearer members of their own ethnic groups. This was a process the municipality was aware of and permitted so long as people went through formal channels to do so, re-registering with their new plot assignments.<sup>1</sup>

The spatial division of Hakahana over time was not the only result observed. There were also growing social gaps between its residents that were reflected in rhetoric concerning legitimacy based on ethnic affiliation as well as long-term or recent migrant residential status. The social reproduction of Hakahana I witnessed over the course of my fieldwork, and the arguments and events that played significant roles in residents' acceptance or rejection of its multi-ethnic community, reflected larger issues and negotiations simultaneously occurring throughout Namibia.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from an interview at the Omaruru Municipality building, conducted with Mr. Xoagub, Deputy Officer of the Municipality on March 25, 1999

Hakahana, as a settlement borne out of an attempt to respond to pressures of transformation, economic restructuring, unification, and rapidly increasing rates of migration, became a site where many of these struggles and trials of ethnic co-habitation within greater proximity were being played out. The intervention of the government in the lives of its residents, through their attempts to produce a unified neighbourhood out of existing differences, resulted in the production of context both within the boundaries of Hakahana and in the wider 'community' of Ozondje. These context-generated and context-creating phenomena are the subject of this thesis and are explored herein through an academic endeavour to illuminate processes of transformation and the incorporation of difference not only in Hakahana, but also throughout Namibia today.

### **Locating the Thesis**

Through a means of processual analysis (Geertz 1992 [1973], Rosaldo 1993) this thesis examines not only the creation and reproduction of Hakahana, as it occurred prior to and during my fieldwork, but also the interplay between the various levels of Namibian society and the transformation that results. Paying particular attention to the narratives of memory and lived experience, it explores the micro-level rhetoric and responses, resulting in difference, that are produced through the processes of state formation (Alonso 1994, Appadurai 1996, Barth 1994, Geertz 1992 [1973], Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Rosaldo 1993, Tonkin 1996, Verdery 1994, Werbner and Ranger 1996, Williams 1991a and 1991b).

A study of processes and dynamics allows for a natural consideration of the interpenetration of factors originating from the micro, median, and macro levels of society (Barth 1994). Barth suggests that social realities can be better examined through a three-tiered analysis of the micro, median and macro levels. At the micro level is the consideration of the individual, 'the events and arenas of human lives; the management of selves in the complex context of relationships, demands, values and ideas' (Barth 1994:21). At the median level lies an analysis of 'entrepreneurship, leadership and rhetoric; here stereotypes are established and collectivities are set in motion' (ibid:21). And finally, on the macro level the states or nations and the global international arena and discourse must be examined. Stopping short of an analysis of considerations of globalisation, this thesis carefully



examines these various levels and the dialectics through which they interact, and indeed, those which they produce and reproduce.

Although the struggle that takes place within Hakahana produces rhetoric that contains sentiments of ethnic differentiation and what are, *perhaps*, the seeds of conflict, my analysis herein bypasses any isolation of ethnicity as an analytical category and declines any exploration of its particular nature. Rather, in order to avoid what I perceive to be an analytical cul-de-sac, encountered from intellectual exploration attempting to determine the social salience of ethnicity, my analysis examines, instead, the processes and dynamics involved in the incorporation and production of difference - ethnic and otherwise (Alonso 1994, Verdery 1994, Williams 1991a). Through this approach, I do not dismiss the role of ethnicity in the creation of difference, but examine it as an important, historically-constituted category of identity that positions people in the social and economic struggle occurring in Hakahana today (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

The focus on transition and transformation that is maintained throughout this text, utilised by anthropologists to illuminate patterns of cultural behaviour which result from periods of significant social, economic and/or political change (Ashwin 1999, Burawoy 1999, Comaroff 1982, Comaroff and Comaroff 1987, Verdery 1999) perhaps also merits mention in this section. It must first be said that, due to the time in which my fieldwork took place, it was not possible to avoid such a consideration. As addressed above, change was ubiquitous (alongside the remarkable phenomenon that the citizens of Omaruru did not perceive it) and for this reason, I have chosen to address it as central to the analysis of my data contained herein. Indeed, the nature of my study of the creation and recreation of Hakahana *demands* such observation. However, there is a vital question that an exploration of 'transition' begs, which is: Transition *from* what? and *to* what? I must clarify here that my analysis contains no one certain temporal or 'developmental' set of anchors that positions it. The 'from' determinant, however, is perhaps more defined than the 'to', if only loosely so. Having stated this, there is *also* no one particular point from which I position understandings *throughout* this text, no ground zero, if you will. But rather, mimicking the evidence of lived experience, I explore social processes and their influences as possessing varied points of origin. For example, the concept of transformist hegemony that I employ in chapter 6 (a derivative of Gramsci's (1971) theory of 'transformism'), in an analysis of developments

occurring under Namibia's new government, necessarily anchors transformation from the temporal point of Independence. However, many of my concerns within this work describe processes of transformation that originate at *various* points in Namibia's colonial past, for example, as ethnic categories were created or as difference as an ideology became all-pervasive.

Through the considerations mentioned above, this work provides social analysis of various phenomena as a result of historical factors, as well as factors found in an exploration of Namibia's micro, median and macro levels today – a type of study of which there is a great paucity in the existing literature. Historians and anthropologists have been working diligently, and in increasing numbers, to reconstruct and document Namibia's history and the history of its numerous cultures and consciousnesses.<sup>2</sup> However, many works present case studies of the lives of citizens in descriptions of particular social or economic phenomena<sup>3</sup>, or social analysis of macro-level economic and political policy;<sup>4</sup> while only limited studies exist concerning the continued effects of history in combination with various social and political factors on the lives of Namibians today (Pendleton 1996, Rohde 1993 and 1997, Widlok 1996). Of these, however, Pendleton's ethnography (1996) of life in Katutura, Windhoek's black township, provides the only account of micro-level interaction in a multi-ethnic locality. While he aptly considers historical factors in his analysis, his discussion of the influence of median and macro level variables is less developed. Widlok's study (1996), while initiating a discussion on identity appropriation is, by his own concession, limited to research conducted amongst students of the University of Namibia, and does not engage in in-depth analysis of historical or macro-level influence. Rohde's insightful accounts of life in Damaraland (1993 and 1997) are helpful in understanding the roots of ethnic and national identity appropriation which can be transferred to understandings in an urban setting, but their prioritisation of thick ethnographic descriptions, and an evaluation of local ecological determinants within a more ethnically homogeneous reserve area allow little insight into the effects of urbanisation.

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<sup>2</sup> See Cooper 1999, Dederling 1993, Dreschler 1980, Fuller 1993, Gaseb 1999, Gordon 1977 and 1978, Hayes 1993 and 1998, Hishongwa 1992, Katjavivi 1988, McKittrick 1997, 1998 and 1999, Moorsom 1995, Ngavirue 1997, Noyes 1992, Wallace 1994, Werner 1993.

<sup>3</sup> See Burman 1996, Cass and NDT 1994, Cooper 1997, Devereux 1995, Devereux and Naeraa 1996, Eiseb and Fuller 1996, Iken, Maasdorp and Solomon 1994, Lake, Sosin and Mazie 1996, Najda 1994, Peltola 1995.

<sup>4</sup> See Evans 1993, Forrest 1994, Freeman 1991, Gibb 1997, Leys 1995, Lindeke and Wanzala 1994, Pankhurst 1996a and 1996b, Sidaway and Simon 1993, Simon 1995, Tapscott 1990, 1993 and 1995.

The analysis contained herein addresses such concerns of urbanisation and ethnic interaction as they are influenced by all these factors investigated above. Building from the work of historians, social scientists, economists and political scientists alike, this study synthesises existing understandings within these disciplines and micro-level ethnographic data to provide analysis of the multiple levels and variables involved in the transformation of social and political life in Hakahana. While this study views specifically the creation and recreation of life in the settlement, its conclusions extend beyond the local and examine processes occurring throughout Namibia as goals of 'unity in diversity' are pursued and the State and the citizens of Namibia attempt to build 'community' out of existing historical, cultural and economic difference. Additionally, this study contributes to anthropology's growing literature on difference, processes of transition, the force of memory and the production of locality through the consideration of ethnographic data and analysis of micro-, median- and macro-level determinants.

### **Fieldwork and Methods**

It must first be said that, although I entered the field with many set intentions as to how I was going to access the data I sought within Omaruru, the early re-definition of my project and the force with which change was occurring in Hakahana greatly directed my study. As well, I must introduce here my field assistant, Albert Nuwuseb, who, without his linguistic expertise and his own skills in practising fieldwork, I would not have been able to obtain all of the rich data that I was able to with his help.

Although I learned Afrikaans before entering the field and found this knowledge useful, particularly in understanding cross-ethnic interaction within Ozondje (as nearly 75% of Ozondje residents speak Afrikaans), within Hakahana, this knowledge did little to facilitate my understanding of such interaction as the *lingua franca* therein turned out to be Otjiherero. This occurred due to the presence of a large number of recent migrants who are unable to speak or comprehend English or Afrikaans. As Otjiherero and Oshiwambo are mutually intelligible languages, and as many Damara-speakers have also learned Otjiherero throughout their lifetimes, Otjiherero has become the common language spoken throughout Hakahana. As well as helping me to understand dialogues spoken in Otjiherero, Albert was

also fluent in English, Afrikaans, Oshiwambo and Damara and was able to assist in translation in all of these languages. This was invaluable as Omaruru's multi-lingual setting required extensive linguistic knowledge of local and national languages I was incapable of learning due to time restraints.

My first task of field work within Hakahana was to map the settlement. This was a major undertaking as no such map existed and many of Hakahana's outlying areas were rather haphazardly organised. This was a good exercise, however, as it gave me good reason to be in Hakahana daily, and allowed the residents to feel more comfortable with my presence before beginning the survey process. At a later time, I was able to obtain aerial photographs of Hakahana, taken by a friend who paraglides, that confirmed what I was pacing out on the ground. However, at the time, the intrigue caused by my presence and peculiar activity encouraged people to confront me out of curiosity, and this facilitated initial contacts and conversations.

Following the proposed methodological theory of Karpati (1981), it was my original intention to initially survey all of Ozondje and the 'town', however, re-shifting my focus to Hakahana, I decided, in the interest of time and resources, to limit this phase of my research to a widespread survey of Hakahana and Ozondje. Within Ozondje and Hakahana, Albert and I spent the first few months surveying nearly 900 households – 637 in Ozondje and 243 in Hakahana. From this data I was able to generate statistics that were necessary in viewing trends to be investigated more intensely (Karpati 1981:137). The initial survey (see Appendix A), was aimed at accumulating general data concerning people's gender, occupations, which shops they patronised, their marital status, the languages spoken by them, the number of children they have in total, and the number who are living with them, the organisations they belong to, how long they have lived in Omaruru, where they spend a majority of the year, where they consider 'home' to be, etc. These surveys initially helped to elucidate links between locality and memory and were the basis for further, more detailed research investigating these associations.

Within Ozondje there were never problems with persuading people to be surveyed. Most expressed a genuine interest and many even invited me into their homes for a visit or refreshments. Most of the people in Ozondje, however, were familiar with who I was from the start of my fieldwork as I had spent a great deal of time in their neighbourhoods during



my year as a volunteer teacher and had had many of their children as pupils. Within Hakahana, most people were quite receptive to my request to survey them, however, amongst recent Owambo migrants, only a few, but indeed, a few, refused to be surveyed as they were weary of why I wanted the information and for what it was to be used. Generally, I did not persist and moved on to the next household.

The limits of survey research, however, being positivism, atomism and ahistoricism, (Gagnon 1981, Karpoti, 1981, Ellen 1984, and Bertaux 1981), I used this research in combination with the qualitative accumulation of life histories and the practice of participant observation. Through the use of the data I accumulated from my initial survey as a starting point, I began to formulate questions and concerns to be answered in greater detail through the collection of life histories. Using Bertaux's (1981) 'snowball strategy', throughout my collection of life histories, I was able to progress from a less-informed process of data accumulation to one that allowed for a greater 'saturation of knowledge' that elucidated patterns and clarified my understanding of life in Hakahana (ibid:37).

With Albert I was able to collect the life histories of 40 Owambo, 20 Damara, and 20 Herero residents of Hakahana over the course of five months. By simply walking through the three different sections of Hakahana on weekends and weekdays at different times of the day we were able to find people who would talk with us who were from a diverse range of backgrounds. However, Albert's knowledge of Hakahana and the people who lived there was great, and, often, in the interest of accumulating equal amounts of information from men and women alike, and from long-term residents and recent migrants alike, we would set out in search of individuals who fit particular categories. Life history interviews were tape recorded and transcribed afterwards. However, during the interviews, translation took place immediately which allowed me to probe for further information in order to access particular knowledge beyond people's initial responses. Interviews were conducted in the home languages of the individuals and were initiated by asking the informant to tell the story of his/her life. Only when unable to continue were the informants prompted with questions to follow. They were, on average an hour-and-a-half in length, but also involved introductory phases and casual conversation beyond the parameters of the interview.

The process of life history accumulation, aside from the wealth of knowledge it provided about history and memory, stories of migration, and ethnic and national identity

appropriation amongst Hakahana's residents, also afforded me many other insights into the events and attitudes that formed and constituted the experience of living in Hakahana. I was also able to analyse, together, the information gathered through initial surveys and life history interviews and, at a later point in time, to cross check responses for truth and accuracy.

Aside from these efforts at data accumulation, one of the most informative aspects of my fieldwork was the participant observation in which I was able to engage. Within Hakahana most of this had to be conducted at or around *tombo* houses, as those were the main venues in which people would socialise. This *did* create *some* problems as these establishments have little else in the way of social activities other than drinking. And, while it was perfectly acceptable in Namibia as a female to sit around and drink beer at a beer hall or a bar in Ozondje, a woman drinking *tombo* at *tombo* houses is a practice which carries with it a certain, unfavourable social stigma. For this reason, participant observation in Hakahana was more limited than within Ozondje, but still, I managed to spend a good amount of time lingering after interviews or playing with children and talking with their parents in the streets of Hakahana. Within Ozondje I would often frequent the venues most popular amongst informants from Hakahana and would often play numerous games of pool or sit and have discussions during the day, and at night often go with friends dancing and socialising in such venues.

In April of 1999, I was also able to begin participating in the meetings that were being conducted to create a neighbourhood committee within Hakahana whose members would serve as liaisons between the municipality and the residents of Hakahana. Attending these meetings allowed me to observe first hand the interaction between local government representatives and Hakahana's residents which revealed much information about the practices and attitudes that were governing this interaction and the production and reproduction of Hakahana.

Additionally, I attended most of Omaruru's functions and the cultural festivals and ceremonies in Omaruru and neighbouring towns. These were important events at which I could observe the influence of median level politics. They were also events at which people expressed more freely ideas and attitudes about ethnic identity.

Finally, in an attempt to gather information about the personal and cultural influences shaping the practice of migration of Oshiwambo-speaking people today, Albert and I undertook a month's fieldwork in northern Namibia in July of 1999. While living in two different communities of Peace Corps volunteers I had met, I was able to conduct eight different focus group sessions in neighbouring villages. Through the use of Participatory Rapid/Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods learned in Edinburgh before my departure to the field, I was able to gather data in groups sessions with school teachers and community members in six different villages. Creating casual impact diagrams centring on migration, pie charts determining sources of support, seasonal calendars, time lines of an Owambo person's life, and conducting diamond ranking exercises with categories of identity generated by the participants themselves, the group sessions generated information about the reasons people migrate and the effects of migration on family and community life in regions of origin. These sessions were conducted in Oshiwambo and translated for my understanding by Albert, except on occasion when informants would speak directly to me in English.

Through all of these different means of data collection, I was able to gather extensive information about the phenomenon of migration and its effects on people's lives in contemporary Namibia. Focussing my research on Hakahana, and conducting an ethnography of a locality that defies the isomorphism of culture and space traditionally explored in anthropological study, my research necessitated a consideration not only of micro level interaction within the neighbourhood, but also of median and macro level factors that influence residents' varied imaginings and understandings of the world today.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis begins with an introduction, in chapter two, to the historical creation of social and spatial hierarchy within Omaruru. It provides the historical knowledge necessary to understand the politics and the importance of space on social interaction within Omaruru's existing landscape of difference.

Chapter three provides a historical overview of migration and mobility within Namibia. It addresses the history of migration as it was enacted by men and women, and as

it affected male-female relations, shedding light on historical causal factors for patterns found in Namibia today.

Borrowing theory and classifications found in sociological analyses of migration, chapter four investigates the 'push and pull' factors that govern residents of Hakahana's decisions to migrate. It also incorporates data accumulated in northern Namibia that highlights the conditions and attitudes found in the regions of origin which additionally influence patterns of migration today. Through the use of case studies it explores the varied cultural, economic and social factors influencing trends of post-Independence migration. Additionally, it contributes to an overall discussion of micro-, median- and macro-level causality of migration as a social phenomenon.

Chapter five examines the creation and transformation of social, economic and political life within Hakahana. It addresses the effects of increased migration on social and economic realms within Omaruru, focussing in on the challenges these shifts create to the formation and maintenance of identity and 'community' within Hakahana.

Chapter six analyses the social and political contents of memory narratives collected from Hakahana's residents. Through an examination of the importance of people's varied experiences in imagining and understanding the world in which they live, and the influence of developing transformist hegemony, it investigates the force of memory in creating, recreating and resisting political, social, and moral understandings of the present.

Chapter seven, examines the production and reproduction of Hakahana as a locality, investigating the role of the State and local leaders in the development of the settlement, as well as the role of its inhabitants in resisting and transforming Hakahana as a neighbourhood.

Together these chapters investigate the processes of migration, state formation and identity appropriation in the transformation of politics and society in Namibia today. Through an exploration of the meanings and moralities that the citizens of Hakahana attribute to these processes, this study demonstrates the contexts that are produced and reproduced through the interpenetration of the micro, median and macro levels of Namibian society.



## Chapter Two

### An Introduction to Omaruru: Colonialism and the Creation of Social and Spatial Hierarchy

Omaruru is a central Namibian town located 285 kilometres (177 miles) north-west of Windhoek, the Capital City, and 270 kilometres (168 miles) inward from Namibia's Atlantic coastline. Situated in the Erongo region, in Omaruru district, it is one of a number of towns in Namibia's 'transitional zone'<sup>1</sup> and is linked to other such towns in Namibia's central



**Map 2.1 Namibia and bordering lands (Adapted from figure found on the CIA website).**

regions by tarmac roads and train routes (Pankhurst 1996:12). The availability of transportation to and from Omaruru among destinations within this network of towns and cities is good. Omaruru and other central Namibian towns can be easily reached by private

<sup>1</sup> Namibia's 'Transitional Zone' is a narrow belt of land further east of the Namib Desert and further inland from Namibia's 'Small Stock Zone' (on the fringes of the Namib Desert) that has an average rainfall of 250-350mm per year. Soil, grass cover and surface water are sufficient in some places within this zone for keeping cattle, however, small stock husbandry is more common. The 'Transitional Zone' covers a number of commercial farm districts as well as the easternmost parts of Kaokoland and Damaraland (Pankhurst 1996:12).



cars, buses or *combis*<sup>2</sup> that regularly travel these routes. Although there is a government operated bus service that travels from Windhoek through Omaruru to northern Namibia, most residents of Omaruru prefer to travel by *combi* or private car. Prices of travel vary depending on petrol prices and are negotiable, but the standard rate of pay now falls around N\$15 (£1.50) per 100 kilometres. Two train routes running between the coast and Tsumeb, and Windhoek and Tsumeb, both passing through Omaruru, provide another option for less expensive, albeit slower travel to and from the town.

To the former reserves of Okombahe and Otjiporongo and to nearby farms along these roads transportation is less readily available. There are no official buses or licensed *combis* that travel these routes and hitchhikers rely on the unpredictable chance of sharing space in private vehicles that infrequently travel the dirt roads to nearby, less central destinations. Traffic on these roads is considerably heavier on the last two weekends of every month when teachers and other government employees travel the distance to and from Omaruru to spend monthly paycheques at Omaruru's shops, and to conduct other business in the town. Otherwise, hitchhiking between Omaruru and rural destinations along these roads can entail a day-long wait in order to travel distances less than 80 kilometres. For this reason, it has become a strategy of elderly Namibians supported by their children to relocate from the former reserves to Omaruru in order to receive more frequent visits, and hence, more regular supplies of food and clothing. This pattern has increased over time as livestock kept on the reserves have continued to die off and food supplies have become less reliable.<sup>3</sup>

### *Town Limits*

Since the late 1800s, with the development of German colonial rule and the establishment of Namibia's commercial farming industry, many of Omaruru's citizens have sought employment within the district, yet outside the township's boundaries. And while Omaruru's town limits are officially drawn, its moral boundaries, particularly for its Damara and Herero residents, extend to include farms and locations often up to, but not including,

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<sup>2</sup> A *combi* can refer simply to a van, however, in this context, it refers to a licensed or informally operated vehicle that transports passengers for profit.

<sup>3</sup> Migration in the opposite direction often occurs in search of food relief by elderly citizens of Omaruru who have links to the reserves but no younger working family members to support them.

neighbouring reserve areas. The incidence of more loosely defined localities and the development of patterns of bi-local residence plausibly occurred as a means of ensuring greater security in light of high turnover rates on white-owned farms. It is also likely, however, for Damara and Herero citizens alike, that historically nomadic lifestyles lent themselves to more fluid conceptions of locality that, in turn, supported such developments.

Within the last twenty years, as greater and greater numbers of white farm-owners have sold or left farms to migrate elsewhere, and the former reserve economy has shifted to a more urban-based capitalist economy, many Namibians have relocated to Omaruru township from nearby farms and reserves in search of employment and livelihood. The maintenance of extended kinship networks and less bounded conceptions of locality has enabled this necessary demographic adjustment to occur with greater ease, as the norms in place support a system whereby mobility within the larger locality is more easily undertaken. This occurs as families provide initial housing and security to their members with the expectation of reciprocity in the undetermined future. However, the consequences of an overly burdensome moral economy, coupled with the decline of Omaruru's formal economy has begun to force its citizens into increasingly unstable living situations, and its migrants or return migrants into the pursuit of short-term, seasonal, and largely informal means of employment once in the urban area.

These developments not only reflect the changes occurring as a result of post-Independence transformations within Omaruru, but are also based in the historical development of Omaruru's social, economic and physical structure as an urban locale. To better understand the convergence of these factors, the following section will provide a brief history of Omaruru from its creation as a missionary town soon to encounter colonial influences, through its development as an urban centre supplying labour and products to Namibia's farming and mining industries, to its declining economic situation at the time of Independence.

### **A Brief History of Omaruru Township**

Omaruru, earlier called Okozondje, is thought to have been established around 1870, when Daniel Cloete, teacher and evangelist of the Rhenish Mission, and a few hundred Damara

people, arrived there to settle. By 1870, its name was changed to Omaruru and Herero chief Willem Zeraua (for whom today its main street is named), settled there. Shortly thereafter, Herero paramount chief, Samuel Maharero, granted Omaruru to the Swedish trader, Andersson, in return for the assistance given in the Herero-Nama War. At this time Herero and European populations in Omaruru began to increase, and by 1877 it had become an important trading centre, most notably for a growing fire-arms trade (Köhler 1959).

As dreams of German colonial expansion increased, so did Omaruru's importance as a strategic trading location between northern and southern Namibia, and on July 16, 1889 a German garrison was established in Omaruru to protect the interests of its growing European population. Five years later, on November 26, 1894, as Herero resistance to German colonialism grew, additional German troops arrived and settled in Omaruru. Ten years after that, on January 17, 1904, it became the site of the Herero rebellion which ended on February 3<sup>rd</sup> with the defeat of the Herero by Hauptmann Franke and his troops. After this, remaining Herero citizens left Omaruru district and moved east to where subsequent battles against German troops would lead to further defeat. Gaseb (1999) hypothesises that, given the mass migration of Herero and their herds eastwards, and the incidence of Damara population movements that occurred as a direct result of the war, 'it is possible that this spatial mobility [of Damara people] was accompanied by a social mobility as Damara obtained opportunities to occupy urban jobs which may have previously been occupied by Herero' (1999:19). This is a plausible foundation for the continued urbanisation of Damara Namibians within Omaruru as well as throughout central Namibia, that occurred throughout the twentieth century.

Following the Herero revolt, German colonialists continued to formalise their control over Namibia. Consequently, between 1905 and 1909 Omaruru saw the establishment of a railway station, the erection of Franketurm monument commemorating the German victory against the Herero rebellion, (which still stands today as a historical site cum tourist attraction), and the opening of the German Government School. As well, with the continued immigration of German citizens to Namibia, Omaruru's farming industry saw dramatic development - expanding from five farms in 1900 to 175 in 1913.

Following German defeat in the First World War, with the transfer of power to the South African government, Namibia's mining and farming industries were developed to an

even greater extent in order to support a growing South African population. Over the first half of the twentieth century increased recruitment and a post-World War Two upsurge in migration brought significant numbers of northern Namibians to central Namibian towns and first established significant populations of said migrants in Omaruru.

As Namibia's mining industry developed, its farm industry suffered. The farming industry, having grown significantly with the establishment of greater numbers of Afrikaaner farms (sold to South African whites at extremely low rates of interest in attempt to address South Africa's 'poor white problem'), began to compete with a growing mining industry for labourers. Because of this development, labourers became coveted commodities and their distribution among and between Namibia's growing mining and farming industries became highly political.<sup>4</sup>

Within Omaruru district one-third of labourers in 1956 were working in the mines, a majority of which were labourers from Owamboland, Okavango, and Angola (Köhler 1959:28). There were substantial numbers of Damara workers involved in mining activities as well. However, the autonomous migration of northern Namibian and Angolan males, as a result of the prohibition of female migration from these regions, and restrictions on their residence within Namibia's central parts, led to their greater compatibility with this solitary lifestyle. Most *Damara* workers opted, rather, to obtain jobs in the farming industry or as domestic workers in German and Afrikaaner households within Omaruru as these forms of employment permitted families to live together.

Herero people from Omaruru constituted the smallest population of labourers in both the farming and mining industries, preferring to engage in independent, pastoral activities for their livelihood. Nonetheless, sizeable numbers of Herero labourers did work in the farming industry and continue to do so today. This often provided opportunities to *combine* salaried farm work with pastoral activities.

Due to the historical developments mentioned above, within Omaruru, differential claims to legitimate residence in the township today underlie ideas of the equal ownership of Namibia by all its citizens. And while migration to and from Omaruru occurs freely under the new government regulations, as jobs and resources become more scarce, these notions of

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<sup>4</sup> For more information regarding the political struggles between Namibia's farming and mining industries see: Cooper, 1999; Gorden, 1978; Moorsom, 1995; and Peltola, 1995.

legitimacy, based on the family's or the individual's long-term residence in the town, emerge in a rhetoric of 'belonging' amongst the townspeople.

Shifts in Namibia's farming and mining industries have also caused greater differentiation of people's concerns and positioning in the town. Shifts in the farming industry have historically, and do today, most greatly affect Damara and Herero citizens, while changes within Namibia's mining industry more greatly affect Owambo Namibians. But, in all, the rapid decline of *both* industries in the final years of apartheid and since Independence has meant significant population growth for most central Namibian towns of substantial size. In Omaruru, these shifts in economic opportunity, as well as the life changes they have necessitated, are reshaping not only the realities faced by Omaruru's citizens, but also the boundaries of the township itself.

The following sections examine and portray life in Omaruru today as it is influenced by the social and physical boundaries created throughout its history. As well, they address the present spatial and temporal components involved in Omaruru citizens' negotiations for legitimacy concerning membership in both local and national communities.

### **Life, Boundaries, and the Mapping of Difference in Omaruru Township**

Similar to most central Namibian towns, Omaruru's structure continues to reflect its history of racial and ethnic separatism. Previously, during German, then Afrikaner colonialism, special consideration was given to creating separate living spaces for black and white residents with separate schools and facilities isolating the two populations from one another not only spatially, but also socially. While this separation was put in place during earlier years of German colonialism, informants in Omaruru indicated there was a great shift in the degree of separation that existed prior to and following increased Afrikaner presence in the town. They reported much greater intermingling of people from different racial and ethnic groups before the strengthening of an Afrikaner presence in Omaruru. The increased segregation that came about as a result of Afrikaner immigration was supported by laws put in place by the South African Administration prohibiting black Namibians, not only from residing in but, also, from entering the town without the accompaniment of a white person. Today, while the dissolution of residential laws supports greater intermingling of people



from different populations, and indeed, greater numbers of black Namibians are beginning to reside in town, there remains in place a *de facto* separation of living spaces.

While Omaruru township was previously divided into two main sections, the 'location' or 'black township', Ozondje, and 'the town', which housed its white population, today, added to its structure is a third section called Hakahana, a 'reception area'<sup>5</sup> that provides squatters' plots to nearly 2000 of Omaruru's current residents. Each of these sections remains separate from the others and has distinct characteristics that situate it within a spatial hierarchy. While residents from all three of Omaruru's sections express a shared identity as citizens of the township, they also express social identities associated with belonging to the particular sections in which they live.

### *The 'Town'*

The first of Omaruru's three sections, referred to as 'the town', predominantly houses Omaruru's German and Afrikaner populations. It is also the site of Omaruru's main street of commerce. Upon first entering Omaruru township one is greeted by the lush grass and swaying palm trees of the community park. And houses with swimming pools and well-groomed lawns line the main street along with shops and businesses housed in buildings reminiscent of those found in a small German village.

The town is also the site of Omaruru's oil, brick, and animal fodder factories that employ decreasing numbers of Omaruru's citizens due the scaling down of production that has occurred over the last decade. It also contains Omaruru's German and Afrikaans primary schools as well as Omaruru Primary School, the former Afrikaner, government-funded primary school that now educates children of all cultural backgrounds primarily from families of local and regional professionals. Although attendance of Omaruru Primary

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<sup>5</sup> The designation of Hakahana as a 'reception area' is in some ways inappropriate. Although Hakahana has become the main receptacle for more recent migrants from a) nearby farms that have gone bankrupt, b) from the drought-stricken reserves, and c) from Namibia's north, many of Hakahana's residents have resided either solely or bi-locally in Omaruru since birth. The results of a survey conducted involving 243 of Hakahana's 411 homes (at the time of completion) indicates that, much like Owen Crankshaw found in his analysis of informal squatters settlements on the Witwaterstrand, much squatting in Omaruru is generally the result of natural urban population growth in the face of a chronic housing shortage, low wages and high unemployment. 50 per cent of the Hakahana residents surveyed reported to have lived in Omaruru for more than 10 years, with 29 per cent reporting to have lived in Omaruru since birth.

School no longer occurs based on racial orientation, the higher tuition and hostel fees demanded of its pupils effectively precludes the attendance of many Namibian children from families with lower incomes.

As mentioned above, throughout Namibia's apartheid era, Omaruru's 'town' was reserved for its white citizens. Today, and since approximately ten years prior to Namibia's Independence, Omaruru's town centre has become a gathering place for its black and white populations and continues to serve as its main commercial area. The main street contains two banks, three petrol stations, two butcheries, two supermarkets, a few restaurants, a hotel, some clothing and fabric stores, hardware stores, convenience stores, a post office, and a variety of other businesses. Most shops within the 'town' are owned by local Afrikaner or German entrepreneurs. However, within the last couple of years, as a testament to Namibia's growing capitalist, free market economy, shops selling inexpensive imported products from China have made their appearance on the main street of Omaruru. Additionally, 'Cash Loan' agencies, charging extortionate rates of interest, are now situated on Omaruru's main street, targeting customers with little collateral in need of short-term loans to cover immediate expenses or to invest in small entrepreneurial endeavours. Also a reflection of Namibia's shifting economy, the Central Hotel, once a locally-owned establishment providing affordable accommodation to low-budget travellers and restaurant and bar facilities to Omaruru's locals, was sold to a German foreign investor and renovated in 1999 to become a luxury hotel targeting a clientele of affluent tourists.

On most days in Omaruru's town business is slow with only a steady trickle of customers patronising its quiet shops. However, on the last two weekends of each month, there is a dramatic increase in the town's activity as teachers one week, then other government employees the next, receive their monthly paycheques. Not only are Omaruru's citizens flocking to the town centre at these times of the month but, as mentioned above, Omaruru also serves as a central merchants' town connecting it to a number of rural destinations. People from farms and neighbouring towns as far as 80 kilometres away make monthly, if not more frequent, trips to stock up on provisions at Omaruru's shops and to patronise its banks and its post office.

The 'town', is arguably the most developed living space within Omaruru. Many of its streets are tarmac and its residents (as mentioned above, predominantly German and

Afrikaner families) live in substantial concrete homes with surrounding yards of grass and flower gardens. Houses within the town are equipped with indoor plumbing and electricity and the spaciousness of housing plots provides privacy and peace to its residents. While there are greater numbers of black Namibians and white foreigners beginning to purchase or rent homes left unoccupied after the outward migration of white Namibians (and indeed residence in 'town' is greatly desired), properties are often selectively sold, let out, or left vacant by wealthy owners attempting to control the demographic composition of certain neighbourhoods.

Despite the fact that living space within the town is necessarily becoming more integrated, social life within the town remains highly segregated and geared towards its white citizens. Bars and restaurants within the town are usually operated with the policy of maintaining a predominantly white clientele by discouraging the attendance of black patrons. The discouragement of patronage by black Namibians is usually achieved by the more subtle means of silent intimidation and the creation of a palpable tension in their presence, but can also entail the use of the more aggressive tactics such as hassling and refusing to serve black customers. German and Afrikaans citizens of Omaruru alike engage in these attempts to maintain segregated social space, however, among black informants, Afrikaners' commitment to this separation is considered more stringent, and their tactics, more aggressive. This results largely in a preservation of pre-Independence social organisation that designates the 'town' as a social space for white Namibians, and the 'location', or 'Ozondje', a social space for black Namibians.

### *The 'Location'*

Ozondje, the second of Omaruru's three demarcated living spaces, is the area formerly established as Omaruru's 'black township'. *Ozondje*, an Otjiherero word meaning 'scorpion' (previously Okozondje – 'place of the scorpions'), refers to the land that runs along the Omaruru dry river bed, west of the town. This section houses the majority of Omaruru's black citizens.

Ozondje still contains the structure of a divided locality having been largely developed during the 1970s by the South African Administration (see Map 2.2). Long-term

residents of Omaruru indicate that, prior to the construction of most of the location's concrete houses, people from various ethnic populations lived in make-shift housing side-by-side in what are today the Herero and Owambo sections of Ozondje. With the construction of the concrete houses that still stand today came greater residential separation based on ethnic groupings. Today, 98 per cent of all homes in the Damara location continue to house Damara residents, 88 percent of homes in the Herero section house Herero residents, and 57 per cent of homes in the Owambo location house Owambo residents.<sup>6</sup>

Across the road from the Owambo section of the 'location' are the 'singles' quarters' - two blocks of one-room flats build during the 70s to house Owambo migrant workers. Today, these structures are still primarily occupied by Owambo residents of Omaruru and are the site of numerous '*tombo* houses' and other informal businesses that form a lively market and social centre frequented by many of Ozondje's residents. While the rooms within these structures were designed to house individuals and have an area of only approximately 9 square metres, today, families consisting of as many as five members can be found to share these commons spaces.

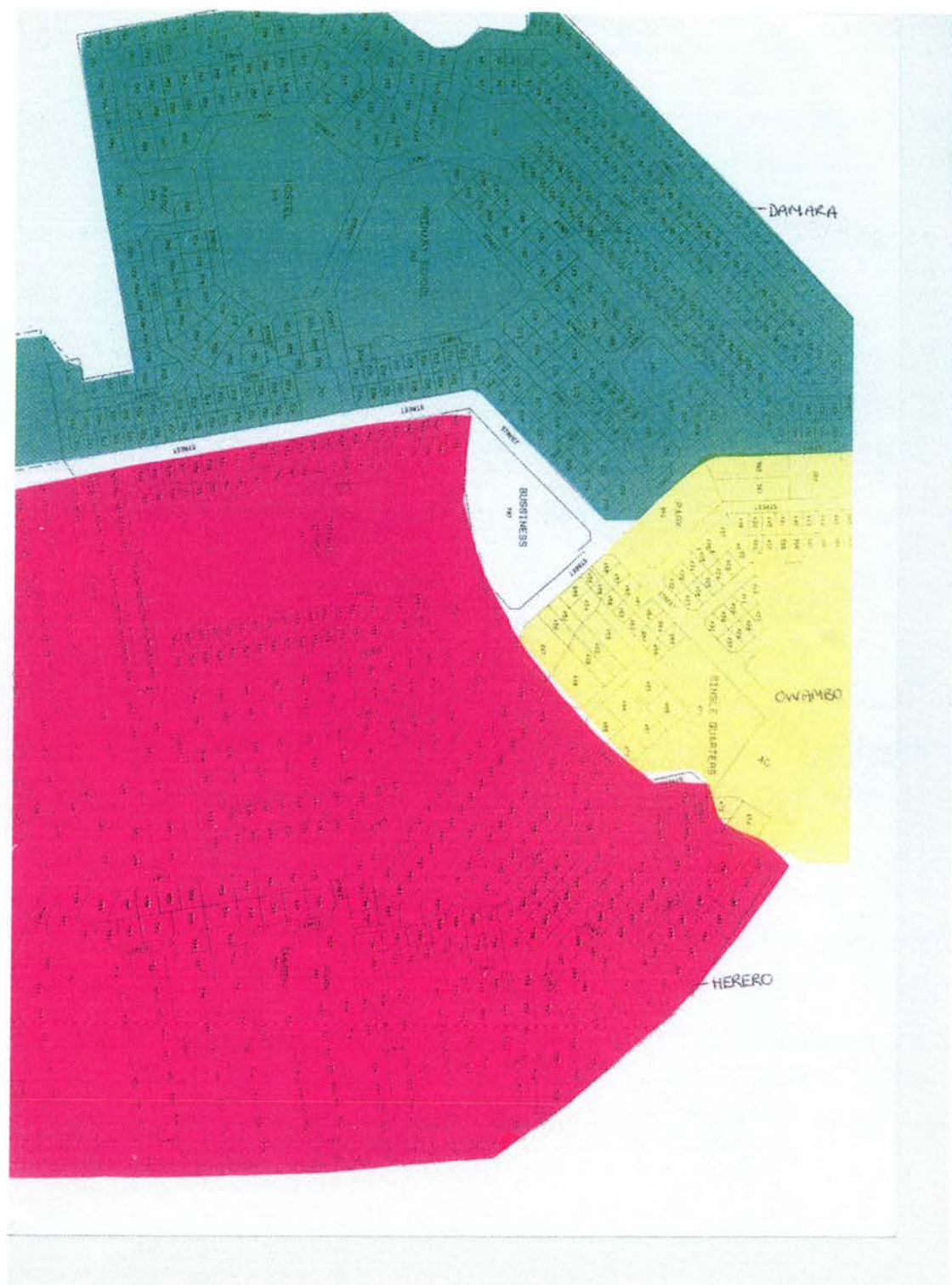
Within the 'location' there are two state primary schools - Ubasen Primary School in the Damara location, and Paheye Primary School in the Herero location. In the past, both schools were well attended. However, teachers at Paheye, Ozondje's Herero primary school, are noted to have a penchant for speaking Otjiherero despite formally changing requirements for instruction in an English medium. And, in recent years, with the growing demand for English language skills for academic success and success in acquiring employment, Ozondje's citizens have begun to favour Ubasen Primary School over Paheye as it is reputed to have teachers better qualified in English.

For many Herero students and some Damara students of families with higher incomes, Omaruru Primary School in the 'town' has become an option for what is considered a better education than that provided at either school within Ozondje. Ethnic and linguistic loyalty is often compromised when choosing schools for Herero youths as parents and grandparents are becoming more aware of the need for young Namibians to develop solid English language skills.

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics taken from a survey conducted in 1999 by the author. The less 'ethnically' homogenous composition of the Owambo section, more commonly referred to as the Ojambo location, is due to the high rates of interethnic cohabitation that developed particularly during the 1970s and 1980s.





**Map 2.2 Ozondje (the Location) and its ethnically divided neighbourhoods.**



Most parents of Owambo children within Ozondje and Hakahana, particularly those who have migrated more recently, still opt to send their youth to Paheye as Otjiherero and Oshiwambo are mutually intelligible languages and placements at Paheye are more easily obtained. However, long-term Oshiwambo-speaking residents of Omaruru, more aware of the reputations that precede both schools, tend to struggle to find placements for their children in Ubasen Primary School.<sup>7</sup>

For secondary education, Omaruru's only option is S.I. !Gobs Secondary School, a government high school located half way between the 'location' and the 'town'. Many youths from the town attend this high school. However, many often leave Omaruru to attend school in other towns and cities where relatives are located, or to live in hostels. Decisions for schooling are based on factors including location of relatives, availability of placements, rates of school fees, availability of hostel accommodations, and for some, the academic reputation of the school.

Standards of housing within the 'location' vary considerably depending on the income and family connections of residents. Particularly in the more affluent Herero section of the 'location', more recently people have begun, privately, to construct homes, the size and sophistication of which are comparable to homes found in the 'town'.<sup>8</sup> Generally, however, houses are one-half to one-third the size of houses in the 'town', and bathroom facilities are often located outdoors. All houses are wired for electricity, although some families are unable to afford or choose not to purchase electricity from the municipality. But indeed, most families who can afford to live in houses within the 'location' have a regular source of income from participation in, or a relative's participation in formal economic activities, and it is often the case that, in addition to electrically lighting their houses, they will often have such amenities as electric stoves, stereos, and often televisions.

Most families living in these houses within the location do not own them, but rather, let them from the municipality. While the average monthly fee to let a house in the location is only N\$100 – N\$150 (£10-15), even these rates prevent many residents of Omaruru from

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<sup>7</sup> Less than five percent of Omaruru Primary School's student body is Oshiwambo-speaking despite relatively even numbers of Herero, Damara and Owambo children of school age in Omaruru. This is possibly an indication of less value being placed on education, or a sign of lower income levels amongst the population.

<sup>8</sup> Many of the more recently built homes connected to the Herero location actually form a new subdivision that houses primarily Damara, Afrikaans and Baster citizens in structures built by TransNamib for its employees.

living within the 'location'. Additionally, many people are prevented from living within these houses due to their limited availability. There is a system in place whereby, once occupied, in order to maintain access to this housing without purchasing it, the original lessor will sublet to family or friends who continue to pay the municipality in the lessor's name. This effectively monopolises all such housing in the 'location' for long-term residents of Omaruru, or the relatives or friends of long-term residents, and excludes recent migrants without developed social or kinship networks from existing systems of access.

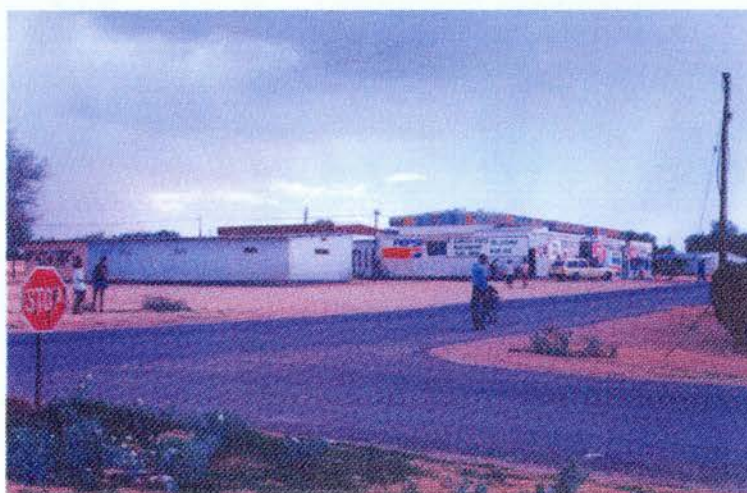
In 1997 the road connecting the tarmac C33 to the 'location' was paved from its entrance to the central shops area, a distance of approximately 500 metres, but all other roads within the location remain unpaved. Housing plots are generally much smaller than in the town which causes residents to have more frequent conflicts with neighbours. High noise levels are the most frequently voiced complaints about life in Ozondje, however, regardless of any shortcomings, obtaining a house within the 'location' is greatly desired, due to their low rents and lack of availability. And while the distance from town is generally seen as an inconvenience, particularly for those who have daily jobs therein, the 'location's' close proximity to the state hospital, the Damara and Herero primary schools, local shops and entertainment venues makes it a socially desirable living space.

Most of the larger shops and venues within the 'location' are located in the township's centre on property let out by the municipality (see Figure 2.1). Within the main group of shops are: the 'Damara Cafe', containing a small grocery and take away section as well as a bar; the 'Herero Cafe', having a similar set-up as the 'Damara Cafe'; Phillipus' Wenkel (Phillipus' Shop), a Damara-owned grocery; a recently-established Owambo-owned hair salon where an Afrikaner-run grocery was previously located; and Kauvee's Grocery, a former Herero shop recently acquired by the German owner of the town's Spar grocery store. The community hall, or 'Entertainment Centre', located just behind this block of shops, is now also privately let to an Afrikaner entrepreneur and has become a popular dance/pool hall.

Most of the shops mentioned above sell many of the same products and are generally well-stocked, giving customers greater option to remain loyal to one establishment over another. However, this is not usually the trend. Rather, due to limited economic resources, most of Ozondje's and Hakahana's residents who patronise these shops are highly

aware of price variations from store to store, even on individual items, and selectively purchase goods based on this criterion. When loyalty is expressed to one shop owner over another it is usually due to the extension of credit. Among the shops in Ozondje, credit is more often granted to individuals within one's extended network of kin or friends than to those with whom one has no social obligations or ties. Because of this practice, many customers appear to be expressing ethnic loyalty in their choice of shops, however, when asked why they patronise one shop over another, they insist such decisions are based on financial rather than social considerations.

Aside from the group of central shops discussed above, there are additional businesses located throughout the 'location' in its various 'ethnic' sections. These vary in their popularity from venue to venue and from season to season, but are consistently patronised by members of all cultural groups living within Ozondje. As well, many of Ozondje's residents operate small-scale businesses from their homes selling home-made items such as bags of frozen fruit flavoured drink, fried bread, or homebrew. These



**Figure 2.1. Central Shops in Ozondje, Omaruru's 'Location'**

businesses within Ozondje are usually used to supplement household incomes that are otherwise supported by incomes from formal employment of one or more of the occupants.

## *Hakahana*

The third section of Omaruru, Hakahana (see Map 2.3), on the outskirts of the 'location', is bound by the westernmost part of the Damara and Herero locations on one side and, on the other, the remains of a municipal rubbish heap that was partially cleared to make way for its development.

Housing and facilities within Hakahana are considerably less desirable than those in the 'location' or the 'town'. In October of 1997, at the time of its creation, common latrine pits were dug and water sources were established throughout the locality to be shared by a minimum of 20 people, or 5 plots. However, the rapid expansion of Hakahana that was to follow created logistical problems for the municipality and, today, many of the pits dug have been closed off as they've reached capacity. Residents also complain of irregular water availability and the necessity of collecting water by night.

Due to the fertility of the soil within Hakahana, many residents maintain small gardens of vegetables, grains and/or flowers. Some have even endeavoured to plant fruit trees on their plots. The large quantity of water needed to maintain these gardens, however, has led to some of the problems with water distribution that have arisen. And, while initially many residents thought to supplement their food access or cash income through these efforts, for many, as Hakahana's population has grown, the maintenance of these small crops has become impossible.

Most housing within Hakahana comes in the form of squatters' homes that vary in sophistication from painted and adorned structures made of sheets of corrugated iron, to dilapidated structures of compiled paint tins, cut open and extended to provide rusting sheets of metal as make-shift shelter. Additionally, some of the more recent migrants from Namibia's North living in Hakahana have chosen to construct homes of mud bricks and grass roofs, much like those found in their home communities (see Figure 2.2).<sup>9</sup> At the time I commenced fieldwork in September of 1998 no electricity was available within Hakahana. However, in July of 1999, the municipality installed transformers to provide electricity to light Hakahana's streets by night. At that time provisions were also made to potentially

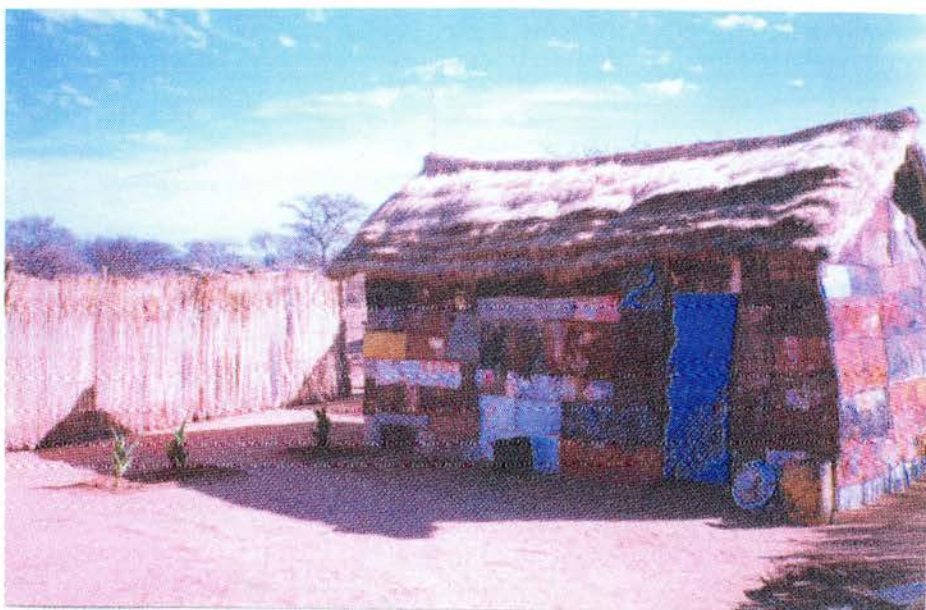
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<sup>9</sup> Based on the shape of these structures it is possible to tell from which region residents originate – round structures generally indicating they are from Owamboland, square structures indicate the Kavango as the region of origin.









**Figure 2.2. Kavango House in Hakahana with rectangular thatched roof similar to those found in Kavangoland.**

supply electricity to individual households in the future. However, the current temporary status of plot allocation and the transitory nature of housing within Hakahana in general does not allow for this project's further development for the time being.

Wandering the dirt streets of Hakahana the reliance of its residents on informal economic activity is apparent. Due to the high level of unemployment Hakahana's residents experience in the formal sector (nearing 75 per cent), the establishment of *tombo* houses and *cuca* shops within Hakahana has been seen by many as the most viable means of generating income. However, when last counted, in November of 1999, there were 36 *tombo* houses and 17 *cuca* shops within Hakahana alone. This overabundance of small businesses effectively undermines people's attempts at economic security and forces most people to diversify their economic pursuits.

An additional handicap experienced by these small-scale businesses is their reliance upon a limited clientele restricted to Hakahana's residents. While residents of Hakahana frequent shops in Ozondje, seldom do Ozondje's residents patronise shops within Hakahana. As a result, aside from a few owners who report to live through the earnings of their businesses, most admit that rather than providing substantial amounts of cash flow these

small-scale businesses are most beneficial in situating one within an informal network of reciprocated labour and support.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 2.3. Aerial Photograph of Hakahana positioned against Damara and Herero Locations (photographed by Heinrich Duder)**

In addition to the sale of petty commodities through the establishment of *cuca* shops and *tombo* houses, Hakahana's residents also engage in the seasonal collection and sale of *paap* (goat fodder that falls from trees lining Omaruru's dry river bed); the irregular sale of raw meat within Hakahana and Ozondje's 'singles' quarters'; and more recently, the crafting of baskets, jewellery, and other 'traditional' items for private sale to tourists and passers-by on the side of the tarmac highway that runs through 'town'.

Hakahana's recent creation, in 1997, as a neighbourhood socially and spatially separate, and in many ways economically isolated, from Ozondje, has been a source of hardship for many of its residents. This hardship has come as they have attempted to reconcile with their relegation to a less valued space and social standing within the hierarchies explored in this chapter. These struggles have begun to shape and define both the boundaries of the settlement and life therein as long-term residents of Omaruru (52 per

<sup>10</sup>Most of the newfound businesses are established by the numerous migrants to Omaruru from northern Namibia and while migrants from central reserve areas and long-term residents of Omaruru also tend to engage in small-scale sale of such items as fried bread and sweets, most entrepreneurial activity within Hakahana is conducted by Oshiwambo-speaking migrants. Residents from Namibia's central parts more often tend to trade labour and skills as commodities in informal networks of exchange.



cent of Hakahana's population), and recent migrants (48 per cent of Hakahana's population) comprise a divided 'community' in a unified space.

This chapter has examined the historical development of the hierarchically-organised and highly differentiated sections of Omaruru township, and the informal strategies employed in maintaining social and spatial boundaries within its various sections. The following chapters explore the historical development of migration, the social and economic motivations behind its continued practice, and the transformation of Namibian society that results. These understandings will further inform a discussion and analysis of the interpenetration of historically-established hierarchy and difference and contemporary micro-, median- and macro-level influences on life in Hakahana today.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Mobility, Migrant Labour and Urbanisation in Colonial Namibia**

This chapter examines historical trends in mobility as they developed throughout Namibia's colonial era and influenced the lives of Namibia's, three most populous ethnic groups – Damara, Herero and Owambo. To begin examining Namibia's relationship with migration, there is an obvious division between the historical experiences of members of these ethnic groups that must first be addressed. Because of colonial policies separating northern Namibia from central and southern Namibia, differential patterns of migration developed in these regions over the course of the country's colonial occupation. These historical differences greatly altered the cultural and social realities of the three aforementioned ethnic groups and, as a result, have led to the existence of varied patterns of migration in Namibia today.

This chapter provides an introduction to the history of mobility, migrant labour and urbanisation as it occurred in Namibia's central parts. It first examines the nature of migrant labour, particularly as it influenced the lives of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, and the patterns that developed as its popularity in the North grew over time. A separate section then addresses the effects of migrant labour on the lives of Owambo women as colonial policies of containment prohibited mobility and produced particular effects on the development of gender roles and cultural practice. These sections are followed by another examining urbanisation, participation in wage labour, and the colonisation of Namibia's central regions, concentrating on the effects of these phenomena on the lives of Damara and Otjiherero-speaking Namibians.

An introduction to these particular histories provides the understanding necessary for the analysis, provided in the following chapter, of the continued patterns and effects of migration on Namibia's social and economic development today.

## A Brief History of Owambo Migrant Labour

With the exception of a small number of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians who settled permanently in central Namibian towns by evading bans on settlement in the Police Zone<sup>1</sup> (Wallace 1994:5), an overwhelming majority of Oshiwambo-speaking men continued to circulate between their homes in the North and their jobs in central Namibia. Patricia Hayes has argued that this is a 'testimony to the strength both of existing kinship and political structures and of migrant labour controls' (Hayes cited in Wallace 1994:6).

While it is true that continued circular migration (or circulation) was the norm for most Owambo migrant workers, the nature and duration of their migration were variable factors influenced by macro level policies of the State, and social pressures and constraints imposed by local elders on the micro level. A third influence, Gordon has argued, based on the micro level, involved 'the changing cultural ecology in the source area' (Gordon 1978:261).

Owambo migration for contract labour is considered to have begun when 'a few hundred Owambos had found relatively short-term work in the building of the harbour at Swakopmund from 1898 to 1903 and at the same time in the construction of the railway from there to Windhoek' (Peltola 1995:3). As was the case in many African cultures, culturally-determined movements were already well in place where,

The movement of young males from their home communities, often for several months at a time and covering large distances, represented a traditional means by which they demonstrated their bravery and prowess and their preparedness for the transition from adolescence to manhood. (Parnwell 1993:30)

Aided by its cultural predecessors *Omutenge* (a process of tribute labour) and the practice of raiding, along with an established cultural value of mobility, migrant labour became a culturally and economically viable means of maximising the contributions of young males to the household economy.

Other factors that contributed to the acceptance of migrant labour were the devastating effects of the Rinderpest pandemic of 1897 which forced households to seek

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<sup>1</sup> The Police Zone is the area designated by the German colonial administration in 1907 to demarcate boundaries of areas under German colonial rule. It extends from the southern border of the Etosha pans to Namibia's southernmost border with South Africa.



alternative financial opportunities, and the more flexible nature of the contracts under early German colonial rule. Contracts were only of a six-month duration and could commence at any time. This allowed migration to be seasonal and permitted continued integration of participants in the cultural life of the village and the seasonal cycle of subsistence production (Hayes 1992; Moorsom 1995; and McKittrick 1998).

Another appealing factor of contract labour for young men was that, in its early stages, it could be practised much like *Omutenge* and raiding – in large groups of men from one's own village. Migrant labour was also usually practised as a form of target migration where individuals could undertake a single journey in aim of achieving the means to purchase cattle and facilitate the marriage process (Hayes 1992:279). However, having started as a cultural extension of previous forms of tribute labour and possessing all the characteristics of a rite of passage for young males into manhood (Peltola 1995:11), migrant labour began to establish itself as a means of creating social differentiation.

Over time, with the influence of missionaries and the growing exposure to 'the white man's world' (Peltola 1995:12), the desire for material goods and the social value placed on mobility via migrant labour grew (Hayes 1992:279).

Their stories at home were listened to with keen appreciation, and the returning workers – especially if they had managed to bring home some valued things – rose in stature. They began to reform the thinking of all the people. (Peltola 1995:12)

The growing participation and popularity of migrant labour was not, however, a straight forward or immediate process. In fact, up until the end of the Second World War recruitment numbers remained far below target for the South African Administration. Between the two World Wars it is estimated that contract workers never exceeded four per cent of the total Owambo population (Gordon 1978:261). The harsh journey and high mortality rates of migrant labourers were considerable deterrents, as was the South African Administration's decision to extend the minimum contract duration to twelve months in order to alleviate administrative costs and burdens.

In the years following the Second World War, however, Owambo men's participation in migrant labour greatly increased as Namibia entered into what has been labeled its 'cash trading phase' (Gordon 1978). In Owamboland and throughout Namibia, according to missionary records, there became, 'quite literally a mania for money' (ibid:282).

Parnwell explains this as a phenomenon that was occurring in many countries in the developing world mid-twentieth century and contributed greatly to increasing patterns of rural to urban migration.

As capitalism spread into the peripheral and more isolated areas, so the imperatives of migration to satisfy growing cash needs...also expanded. Thus, capitalism simultaneously created a demand for migrant labour and a set of imperatives which encouraged people to seek employment and income via migration. (Parnwell 1993:74)

Increased consumerism and a desire to access capitalist-produced commodities reached even the most remote peasant communities in Owamboland. This, coupled with official trade restrictions imposed in the North by the South African Administration increased the popularity of contract labour as it became the only widespread possibility for entrance into the cash economy. As well, there was a 'growing strain on Owamboland's subsistence economy which took place as the population increased, borders contracted and the labour power of grown men was increasingly diverted to the Police Zone' (McKittrick 1998:39).

While the state is not said to have overtly interfered in African agriculture in the North of Namibia, it is said to have deployed either a policy of neglect to ensure that people were poor enough to seek work, or a policy of containment (Pankhurst 1996:415-16). And in 1949, due to the growing needs of industrialisation, the Administration's policy regarding the duration of contracts was altered to extend the mandatory minimum length of contracts to eighteen months. Moorsom (1995) argues that it is around this point in Owamboland's history that a significant shift from peasant to proletarian status occurred. As he has written,

Assuming the most fundamental underlying determinant of social consciousness rests in the mode of acquiring means of subsistence...the critical watershed in the balance of class commitment...is likely to be the point at which with a substantial proportion of peasant families indispensably dependent on income from wage labour, such income becomes necessary not merely for the migrant's own subsistence and for household and production implements, but also to supplement the basic food requirements of his family as well. (Moorsom 1995:47)

As a shift in class identity occurred the nature of men's migration was also altered. Due to state policy, the duration of a single contract was extended, however, the men themselves also began to participate over a greater portion of their adult lives. While still circular in nature, many young men began, through the process of repeat migration over

longer periods of their adult lives, to become progressively more urbanised. Skeldon comments that this is a common phenomenon and, though at first, circulation serves to support rural areas, it later begins to weaken village life as migrants gradually begin to spend more time away (Skeldon 1990:121).

Through these shifts a shared identity was created based on experiences as migrant labourers, often times unifying in opposition to unfair labour policies of the South African Administration. This led eventually to the development of the O.P.O. (Owambo People's Organisation) which identified as its primary goal, the abolition of contract labour. Early in the 1960s this organisation was transformed into SWAPO and formed a nationalist, anti-colonial united front.

As reliance upon the contract labour system grew in order to supplement Owamboland's subsistence economy (with approximately thirty-eight per cent of males away on contract in 1959) support for SWAPO also increased. By 1969 the percentage of Oshiwambo-speaking males away on contract had risen to sixty-seven (Gordon 1978:261), and by 1971, when SWAPO staged its mass strike primarily within Namibia's mines, it is estimated that seventy-four to eighty-nine percent of all Oshiwambo-speaking men had migrated at least once (Moorsom 1995:60). The massive return migration of 1971, however, proved to be no solution as,

[u]ltimately the workers could not escape the major contradiction in their strategy: that although access to peasant resources considerably expanded their power to prolong resistance, they could no longer, as a matter of inescapable necessity, opt out of wage labour indefinitely. (Moorsom 1995:82)

By 1972, partly in response to the increasing sufficiency of the labour supply, the Administration 'liberalised' the system of contract labour (Gordon 1978:290). From this time onward, many Oshiwambo-speaking men and women began to migrate across the Angolan border and into Zambia as the conflict against South African forces commenced. Others took the opportunity to escape a war-torn Owamboland and migrate southward to take advantage of employment opportunities and a newly acquired freedom of movement. This marked an important shift in migration for Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians as, for the first time since the onset of South African rule, men and women alike were free to settle in central Namibian towns and cities, and many did so (Devereux 1995:29).

At this point, in order to provide a better understanding of migration as it influenced the lives of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, it becomes necessary to examine the history of Owambo women in relation to the process.

### **The Effects of Migrant Labour on the Lives of Owambo Women**

From the onset of the contract labour system in Namibia, women from Namibia's North were effectively excluded from wage labour (Moorsom 1995:17). Moorsom explains the ready exclusion of women from contract labour as a result of a pre-existing patriarchal mode of production, 'where men appropriated women's labour mainly in the form of services within the household, but also from productive agricultural labour' (1995:24). As was discussed in the previous section, the acceptance of contract labour within Owamboland was partially attributable to its likeness to the pre-existing institutions of tribute labour and raiding. Both were male activities that played specific cultural roles in socialising young men into adulthood and reproducing patriarchal control over processes of marriage and ownership of property.

While some women did manage to migrate to towns in small numbers early on, they were not permitted to participate in large-scale employment (Moorsom 1995:38). This made the autonomous migration of women greatly impractical and, on the whole, successfully secured their containment within Owamboland.

Joeke notes that in Southern Africa, as in East and Central Africa, 'the migration of male labour to mines and plantations became possible on a permanent and semi-permanent basis because women could, by only a slight extension of their traditional role, take over the task of family support in its entirety' (Joeke 1987:67 cited in Nelson 1992:122). This was the case in northern Namibia, as women assumed the responsibilities of cultivation and reproduction of the family unit, it became increasingly possible for young, single men and married men, alike, to participate in labour migration.

By the start of South African rule in 1919, the pattern was already entrenched. Contract labour had become a principle means 'whereby younger men paid tribute and accumulated the savings in cattle needed to marry and establish a homestead, and women were permitted greater access to land (Moorsom 1995:38). As time passed and the



popularity of migrant labour grew, the duration of men's migration was extended and the likelihood of men's participation increased. As a result, the burden of manual work fell largely on the shoulders of the women as they were forced to take responsibility for cultivating the land, feeding the family, and enduring the sexual deprivation that was a result of the long absences of their male counterparts.

An additional problem that arose as a result of migrant labour was brought about through a pattern of married men establishing second house relationships in the work areas due to their extended absences from their wives – with some practising a form of circular migration for most of their adult lives (Peltola 1995:12). This lessened the benefit to households in Owamboland as the size of remittances decreased when men's earnings were directed, if only temporarily, to the maintenance of second households in the town in which they worked. These relationships were often undertaken between Oshiwambo-speaking men from Namibia's North and women from the central parts from other language groups<sup>2</sup>. Due to South African colonial labour policies that discouraged the development of a skilled or permanent labour force, these men were required to return to Owamboland after the completion of each contract and were most often placed at new work sites upon re-registration for migrant labour. This led to a situation where, in the absence of the biological fathers of their children, the women's families were left with the responsibility of providing life-long care for the children produced from these unions. It also effectively excused men from responsibility for their children as the pattern became standardised and cultural patterns developed that resulted in maternal grandparents often being informally allocated responsibility for the well-being of their grandchildren.

Despite the negative effects on the lives of women in the North and elsewhere, the marriage traditions in Owamboland supported the migration of young men (Peltola 1995:11). While women were given greater responsibility for managing the land and virtually sole responsibility for household maintenance, due to a system of matrilineal decent but patrilocal residence, they were permitted only usufruct rights to the land, acquiring access only through either their husbands or fathers. So while women's responsibilities and their reliance upon the land increased, due to macro-level controls restricting their movement beyond the borders of Owamboland, their reliance upon the micro-level institution of marriage did also.

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<sup>2</sup> This pattern has also had an effect on ethnic and national identity formation for children produced from these unions, a phenomenon that is addressed in chapter 5.



In northern Namibia today, 'land, livestock and most "household" assets are in fact still controlled by the man of the house' (Devereux 1995:17). What makes women's positions in Owamboland even more precarious is the reality that upon the husband's death, his matrilineal relatives are entitled to everything he owned (CASS and NDT 1994). This maintains a social reality where women are highly dependent on their relationships with men to procure land and other resources and, it has been noted, is in contradiction to the present government's constitutional gender equality statement (CASS and NDT 1994:15). This will be addressed in the following chapter as I examine the reasons and restrictions connected with women's migration today.

Patricia Hayes argues that historically women's movement was managed not only by the macro-level policies imposed by the Administration or the micro-level enforcement of gender-differentiated roles and traditions, but also by median-level constraints imposed by local leaders. '[Women's] migration out of Owamboland was prohibited because of its allegedly "immoral effects"...It was a discourse of "responsible patriarchy", shared by both the Administration and Owambo male elders' (Hayes 1992:288). Over time, as Owamboland's population increased along with its reliance on migrant labour, women began to symbolise order and tradition in a period of rapid social and economic change (Vaughan as cited in Hayes 1992:288-9).

The historical constraints imposed on women's movement from all levels of society for various reasons including economic, patriarchal, and cultural concerns has led to a situation still found in present-day Namibia where migration of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians is largely dominated by men, while women tend to remain in Owamboland to carry out work related to reproduction and cultivation. In 1995, an estimated sixty-four percent of all subsistence farmers in Owamboland were women (Devereux 1995:43).

As argued by Hayes (1992), and Peltola (1995), this situation was influenced through the historical convergence of macro-level policies of neglect and containment with micro- and median-level patriarchal and cultural concerns. On the micro level these policies were encouraged as migration of male family members became the most viable strategy for the prosperity of the household.

## Colonisation and Urbanisation in Central Namibia

The history of colonisation within Namibia's central regions is generally one of conquest, extermination, dispossession and forced urbanisation. Beginning in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of mission stations and trading centres, and expanding throughout the 1800s to the formal commencement of German colonialism in 1884, central Namibia became increasingly urbanised as towns and cities grew in support of and as a result of the establishment of trade between German colonialists and indigenous Namibians (Wallace 1994:3). At the time, when indigenous Africans in Namibia first came in contact with German colonists, communities in southern and central Namibia – such as the Nama, Herero, Damara and Baster communities - led a predominantly pastoral existence (Werner 1993:137).

Unlike the situation in Owamboland where the land remained in the hands of indigenous peoples, over time, as a substantial settler population began to form in central Namibia, the colonial project was strengthened to include conquest of central Namibia's most valuable land. This led to the dispossession of mass numbers of Herero Nama and Damara people from their land and livestock. As was the case throughout Namibia, the rinderpest pandemic of 1897 also greatly contributed to the economic hardship within the region. Ninety percent of cattle were wiped out as a result of this catastrophic event, and many pastoralists in the central and southern parts of the territory were forced into wage labour (Werner 1993:138). At this point, many Herero, Nama and Damara people became farm workers and servants because it was their only means for survival (Peltola 1999:4-5).

In the early 1900's, as resistance to German colonialism peaked and the Herero and Nama war of resistance ensued, between seventy-five and eighty per cent of Herero and about fifty per cent of Nama Namibians were either killed or driven east into the Kalahari desert to die of starvation (Werner 1993:138). Most Herero, individuals who survived this period in German colonialism escaped into Botswana, Damara and Nama individuals who survived remained on land undesired by colonial occupants. It is speculated by Ivan Gaseb in a recent historical publication concerning the effects of the war on Damara social mobility, that Damara people perhaps responded by mobilising themselves and 'obtain[ing]

opportunities to occupy urban jobs which may have previously been occupied by Herero' (Gaseb 1999:19).

The result of these factors of herd depletion, land dispossession and war was a massive social restructuring of life in central Namibia, which included a severe decline in pastoralism, forced participation in wage labour, and the significant expansion of towns (Wallace 1994:1). Werner writes that, by 1913 an estimated ninety per cent of adult males in the Police Zone were in wage employment (Werner 1993:140).

In 1919 South Africa was granted the mandate over Namibia by the League of Nations, and soon thereafter began to offer incentives to white South African farmers to settle on farms in Namibia's Police Zone. This was done in an attempt to develop Namibia's commercial agricultural production as well as to alleviate South Africa's 'poor white problem'. The great influx of white farmers further entrenched the pattern of indigenous Namibians' participation in wage labour as an even greater amount of arable land was claimed for white settlement and ninety per cent of cattle and seventy per cent of small stock in the Police Zone were controlled by the white population.

Along with an increased control over land and livestock, South African colonisation brought with it its own forms of racist discourse and legislation which began to shape, if not control, indigenous people's chances for both spatial and social mobility. Certain macro-level policies introduced by the Administration had obvious effects on the lives of indigenous men and women. Mobility of men and women alike was greatly regulated and restricted with the introduction of bans such as the Natives Urban Areas Proclamation, which enforced a blanket prohibition of black entry into towns and regulated the entry of black women into urban areas (Wallace 1994:9). Other policies more subtly influenced the lives and cultures of Namibians as discourse based on ethnic differences began to shape people's opinions of themselves and others. Fuller assesses the influences of the work of Heinrich Vedder, a colonial ethnologist, on Damara and Herero cultures and identities on both the micro and median levels. In doing so, he claims that:

A powerful unifying force to Damara political and ethnic actions emerged in reaction to Vedder's mythological assumption that the Damaras had always been slaves to the Herero. Vedder's book grew into the basis of a popular ethnography, one that was definitely adopted by many Herero in their own process of self-identification. (Fuller 1993:184)

He goes on to demonstrate how this discourse penetrated official circles and determined policies that shaped the cultural and economic lives of those involved. 'Hereros were given more land and resources than Damaras by the Administration. And, outside their own internal divisions, all Namibians classified as Damaras experienced the same pejorative consequences' (Fuller 1993:184).

While macro-level policies were, no doubt, partially responsible for the development of these cultural and economic trends, on the micro and median levels, Werner argues, human agency was a considerable determinant. He argues that, for Herero people, pastoralism was 'a form of self-peasantisation energetically pursued as a means of avoiding wage labour' (Werner 1991 cited in Hayes 1992:280). According to Peltola, the desire of Herero pastoralists to remain autonomous from state controls contributed to cultural values which discouraged the accumulation of capitalist produced goods, and hence, the need to engage in trade or wage labour with white settlers (Peltola 1995:9). It was only after the Second World War that money became important as a means of exchange amongst Herero pastoralists. Even still, due to their ability to access markets to exchange cattle and dairy products (unlike the situation for pastoralists in Owamboland) pastoralism remained a viable option for Herero Namibians, and one that allowed them to maintain a high level of autonomy.

For Damara Namibians there was no such macro-level support for pastoral or agricultural activity, in fact, these practices were actively discouraged. For many, urbanisation became the only feasible option in pursuit of economic security for the household for many. Fuller demonstrates how Damara culture supported the maintenance of extended kinship networks as 'jobs replaced grazing as the scarce and capricious resource' (Fuller 1993:249). The benefits of pre-existing patterns of extended reciprocity and the establishment of extended kinship networks were transferred culturally to support further urbanisation. As Fuller states,

Kin who are already working provide entrée to employment by notifying their relatives of impending job openings, and by providing references to white employers. Kin also give an individual a place to stay in distant towns while he or she seeks work. (1993:239)

As the period of South African colonisation progressed and borders to the White occupied Police Zone were expanded, so was the process of urbanisation. And by 1946,



roughly one seventh of Namibia's total population was living in urban areas (Wallace 1994:1). 'By 1946 surveyed farms, owned by white residents in the Police Zone, comprised 32 million hectares, representing just over sixty per cent of its area or thirty-nine per cent of the country. By contrast, the area reserved for black Namibians in the Police Zone amounted to 4.1 million hectares' (Werner 1993:143). From 1946 to 1954 there was another period of expansion for White settlement in Namibia, and in 1962 the final phase of forced removals and relocations occurred as a result of the 'homelands' policy devised by the Odendaal Commission.

By these state-level policies of land dispossession, reliance on wage labour was made inevitable for most Damara families as eighty-seven per cent of their designated 'homeland' fell within the desert and semi-desert agro-economical region. Additionally, at least thirty per cent of the Herero 'homeland' was (and still is) unsuitable for any agricultural production (Werner 1993:146). Until recent years of drought-induced hardship, however, pastoralism did remain a viable and strategic means of diversifying predominantly Herero, but also Damara household economies.

The reserve economy, established most firmly in the years of South African enforced apartheid in Namibia, has been directly linked to present-day ecological and economic problems by both Devereux (1995) and Pankhurst (1996). According to Devereux,

Although migrant workers' remittances supported their families in the reserves, the contract system as a whole reinforced patterns of dualism within the society. While the white dominated zones of Namibia were being modernised with the help of African labour, the reserves were neglected administratively and economically. The legacy of this system is still being felt in Namibia today ... Thus, farming systems in many areas remain unadapted ... and many households in the rural areas continue to rely on wage transfers from family members working in the urban centres. (1995:24)

Additionally, Pankhurst notes that faulty policies established in the 1980s, meant to correct the problem of environmental degradation in the reserves, only served to contribute to greater social differentiation and a concentration of wealth in the hands of large herders. 'Many households did not have any animals at all, while some herders had accumulated such a degree of wealth and control over land that in Hereroland, at least, they resembled a black bourgeoisie' (Pankhurst 1996:419).



Throughout central Namibia's colonial period land dispossession and forced urbanisation have been the result of macro-level policies aimed at securing the well-being of its white settler populations both in Namibia and in South Africa. For those individuals of Herero and Damara descent, amongst others who have historically inhabited Namibia's central regions, the effects of these policies on both familial and communal life were far reaching and required massive reorganisation of cultural and social patterns and norms.

This chapter has presented the divergent experiences and policies that influenced mobility and urbanisation within Namibia's central and northern regions under colonial rule. Through knowledge of the historical practices that developed over time, the observations of patterns of mobility found in Namibia today can be better understood.

The following chapter discusses *post-Independence* internal migration as it affects, and is a result of, existing social and economic realities in the central Namibian town of Omaruru. Through the analysis of data accumulated during a year's fieldwork in Hakahana, and data collected through the use of focus groups conducted during a month's research in Namibia's North, it investigates how the influences of historical experiences and current social variables combine to produce elements of economic and social life in Hakahana today.

## Chapter Four

### Analysing Migration in Namibia Today

Migration in sub-Saharan Africa has been a well-studied phenomenon and one that has undergone much theoretical re-evaluation over time. Spurred on by the post-colonial influx of migrants to African cities over the last half-century, research on population movements in the late 1950s and 1960s 'focussed on the social context in which migration took place, building up the social networks which constrained individual choice' (Skeldon 1990:132). Varying between theoretical analyses based on micro-level determinants and ones that explored the dominance of macro-level influences, studies concerning the reasons people migrate tended to alternate between explanations of migration as the result of individual choice, and migration as the product of societal values and constraints (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:18).

In an investigation of the reasons for migration, it is firstly important to acknowledge that migration takes on different natures depending upon the aims of the migrant (i.e. in the predominance of 'push' or 'pull' factors). It is precisely this criterion that has been a point of departure and one of the principal themes of much of the theory surrounding micro-level analysis of migration (Skeldon 1990:125). Skeldon argues, however, that the 'push and pull' explanation is a platitude at best (ibid:126). Criticising Todaro's model (1977) for being trivial and individualistic because it measures migration as an economic decision enacted by people seeking to maximise real or perceived earning potentials, he insists that an explanation of migration must be found at a higher level than the individual (Skeldon 1990:131). Despite this criticism, when combined with an analysis of macro and median influences and expanded to include explanations beyond the realm of economically motivated behaviour - considering the possibility that 'very often people migrate more in hope than in expectation of finding a better life elsewhere' (Parnwell 1993:72) - an analysis of 'push and pull' influences can offer considerable insight into why migration is undertaken.

Towards a theoretical middle ground, the more inclusive 'structuration' approach to migration, which I employ in the following analysis, takes into consideration the structural causes, such as Namibia's labour market formation and other current economic and political influences, as well as an awareness of the highly selective individual responses and life worlds of those whose behaviours it investigates (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:19). This

approach allows for a consideration of human agency through an investigation of ‘the modes in which social systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction’ (Giddens 1984:25).

Being theoretically well trodden territory, the study of migration is also accompanied by a somewhat extensive classificatory system. While there are no commonly accepted spatial and temporal parameters established to identify the different forms of mobility, in deciding upon the classification of movement as either circular or permanent, ‘there is [generally] great importance attached to the intentions of the migrant at the time of departure with regard to whether or not he or she expects to return’ (Parnwell 1993:23).

For the purposes of my analysis of migration in Hakahana, an understanding of a few, specific forms of mobility will be necessary. To begin, *circulation* or *circular migration*, one of the most common forms of mobility practised in Omaruru generally refers to longer-term movements between places of origin and destination which may involve one or more cycles of outward and return movement. With this form of mobility it is also assumed that the migrant will, at some stage, temporarily or permanently return to the place of origin.

*Step migration* or *hierarchical migration* refers to the situation where the migrant arrives at a destination after a series of short term moves to other locations, ‘typically moving up the urban hierarchy from village to capital city’ (Parnell 1993:13). *Return migration* is used to term the stage in the migration cycle when the migrant returns to his/her place of origin and *counter-stream migration* is the term used to indicate movements in the opposite direction to the predominant streams of migration. Lastly, *permanent migration* is used to describe mobility where the mover has no intention of returning to the place of origin and where a lot of the migrant’s energy is put into becoming established in the new location.

Using this system of classification as well as the theory noted above, the following sections examine why and how migration has occurred in the lives of various residents of Hakahana. This is done through an examination on three overlapping levels of inquiry. The micro level looks at the factors which compel individuals to leave their home areas, or in the case of return migration, to leave their work areas and migrate to Omaruru. It investigates how and why the decisions to migrate are made by individual households, and often times,

how they are contested. At the median level, it attempts to reveal patterned regularities in the migration process by examining the prevailing social and economic conditions in both the major source and destination areas and the influence of cultural and communal constraints and enablers. However, before delving deep into this analysis, the influences of migration on the macro level are first explored. This level considers some of the influences on migration stemming from state and international policies of old and those affecting the lives of Namibians today.

This chapter focussing mainly on Owambo migration, as it is occurring with the greatest frequency in Omaruru today, and is a major influence in the transformation of the town's social and economic spheres. Once again, because of the varying natures and determinants of male and female mobility of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, both historically and today, it is necessary to add another layer of analysis to our understanding. In order to gain a holistic understanding of the causal factors involved in gender-differentiated migration and the consequences associated with migration in its different forms, an analysis is conducted on accumulated case studies of female migrants to Omaruru. This chapter finishes with a brief look at Herero and Damara migration, predominantly in an effort to compare and contrast these trends of migration with those of Owambo migration. Its exploration of the greater preponderance of push factors resulting from drought and the effects of macro-level economic reform demonstrate the more context-driven migration of Damara and Herero Namibians to Omaruru and the shifting effectiveness of previously developed networks and norms in light of these transformations.

### **Macro Level Influences on Migration in Post-Independence Namibia**

As has been the case in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa over the past century, Independence for Namibia signified a pivotal point at which rapidly changing social and economic conditions both caused and were caused, in part, by increased rural-to-urban migration. As discussed in the previous section, most of the policies of Namibia's colonial past served to reinforce patterns of dualism between underdeveloped, economically dependent reserves and modernised, prosperous urban centres. Pankhurst argues that the complex patterns of extreme differentiation revealing themselves over Namibia today are



due, in part, to the 'political strategy [under apartheid] in which the promotion of inequality played an important role' (1996:419).

While Independence was viewed in Namibia, as well as the world over, as a meaningful triumph over an extreme and oppressive colonial government, the laborious and costly task of reversing the effects of colonial wrongs of unequal development and profound social differentiation was a sobering reality little mentioned. In congruence with the assumption that there is a close association between the unevenness of development processes and the incidence of population movements (Parnwell 1993:4), the will to exercise a newly acquired freedom of mobility and the hope of reaping the benefits of Namibia's new era was enough to attract great numbers of migrants from Namibia's less-developed rural reserves to its modernised towns and cities. However, as Connell suggests, migration 'proceeds out of inequality and further establishes this inequality' (Connell cited Parnwell 1993:9). And indeed, the effects of increased migration currently being experienced in Namibia appear to make its situation no exception. As Devereux reported of the conditions facing these migrants only five years after Independence,

For those who have limited skills...competition for employment is fierce, wages are low, and many are forced to eke out a subsistence in the urban 'informal' sector. The informal sector itself is underdeveloped, with an over-emphasis on petty commodity trading which, in many quarters, has reached saturation point. Urban poverty is thus a growing phenomenon in Namibia and the situation is likely to deteriorate further if employment opportunities are not created in both rural and urban areas (Devereux 1995:36).

Indeed, the situation has continued to deteriorate and, based upon my research conducted in Hakahana in 1999, the effects of the government's inability to create employment opportunities, the increased stress on local resources, and the resulting increase in crime and alcoholism are factors that are all taking their toll on Omaruru's social stability. As Devereux confirms, 'the gap between heightened expectations of material benefits of independence and national development and inadequate capital and human resources to generate such benefits is a post-colonial dilemma to which Namibia is new but already no stranger' (Devereux 1995:24).

Another trend that has been observed in many African countries including Kenya, Zaire, Nigeria, Zambia, Gambia and Zimbabwe and is generally viewed as a post-colonial phenomenon is the development of more permanent patterns of migration (Skeldon



1990:105). In Namibia, the dissolution of formal macro-level constraints on mobility which, through policies of mandatory circulation were undoubtedly instrumental in maintaining urban/rural links (Skeldon 1990:133), has led to a situation where migrants have begun to remain in urban areas for progressively longer lengths of time. This is particularly the case for migrants from Namibia's North. The result has been a reduction of the size and reliability of remittance flows to rural areas and the weakening of rural-urban links that formerly served to diversify the migrant's social networks and, hence, increase his/her welfare security. Much like Nelson described of post-Independence Kenya, this decrease in circulation, for some, appears to be a cause and a consequence of other post-independence phenomena such as growing unemployment and increasing class differentiation. Nelson cautions that the end result of this stifled mobility is often the trapping of poor and/or landless people in urban ghettos (1992:111-112).

The following case study contains an excerpt from an interview with a male Oshiwambo-speaking informant, age 29, who migrated to Omaruru from northern Namibia as a young, single man around the time of Independence. Demonstrating the phenomenon of constrained mobility brought about by an individual's inability to afford the cost (psychological as well as financial) of movement, his story brings to light many of the macro-level factors contributing to and resulting from restricted mobility of migrants in Omaruru today.

#### *Case Study 1- Restricted Mobility and Urban Confinement*

*I am Paulus Kondjeni. I was born in Ohangwena in 1970 and stayed there until 1989. That's when I came to Omaruru to look for a job. The children were too many at home and my family wanted me to come and find a job. I came to my grandfather. We were staying in the Ojambo location<sup>1</sup> until 1994 when my grandfather died. That's when I moved to the squatters' camps and now I'm here in Hakahana. I've only had one job since I came here. Just after I came here, in 1990 I got a job as a gardener. That was a good time. I had the feeling then that my life was going to change. But then I went back to Owamboland to visit in 1991 and after I came back I never found another job. I have never been back to Owamboland since. I am just here in Omaruru. There is nothing here in Omaruru that has changed since I came here. People who did not have jobs then, they are still not having jobs today. Even now if you go to a white person and ask for a job, he will say there is no job – you can go up there to Oshakati and look for a job, and even there you won't find one. Namibia has only changed for the people who read and write. We people who don't read*

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<sup>1</sup> The Ojambo location is the section of Omaruru's former black township, Ozondje, comprised of cement houses occupied, in majority, by Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians who are long-term residents of Omaruru.

*and write, nothing has changed for us. I never went to school because my father was having a lot of cattle and I was the only one at home then who could look after them. It's hard too if you don't know Afrikaans. I speak Oshiwambo and Otjiherero now and I can understand a little Afrikaans, but I can't speak it. I have thoughts to have a better life, but I don't read or write so...sometimes I get up and think I have to wash myself up and try to go find a job so that I can buy some soap, but to start going, I don't even have soap to wash myself. Right now I am just living through my Kwanyama friends here. I look after their house while they are away in Owamboland. It's hard though because here, you know, everything is about money. But up there we are growing food and I am not paying for food. I am planning to go back to Owamboland, but the only problem is that there is no money. I want to go back to my parents for a little bit so that my parents can give me a blessing so that I can find a job.*

Returning to the subject of skewed development resulting from periods of both German and South African rule, Paulus' story demonstrates the resulting effects currently being experienced as individuals from Namibia's rural areas attempt to enter the job market today. Wade Pendleton, in his ethnography of life in Katutura observes that,

People in...communal areas have fewer jobs in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy, fewer opportunities for formal education and vocational training, and they have less access to modern media. When rural communal dwellers migrate to Katutura looking for jobs, they usually approach the job market with a serious handicap. (Pendleton 1996:18)

As Namibia's mines and factories have undergone processes to scale down or discontinue production, and as a result of the severe recessionary impact on Namibia's economy stemming from failure within Namibia's commercial agricultural sector due to the 1992-3 drought, the need for unskilled and semi-skilled labour has greatly decreased. As a result, Namibia's job market has become increasingly competitive and geared towards a more specialised labour force. For many Namibians this has meant a dramatic and rather sudden shift in employment criteria for even the most menial of jobs as formal education and specialised training have become important factors in eligibility at most levels of formal employment.<sup>2</sup>

Upon migration to Namibia's central parts, language is often another handicap experienced by migrants from Namibia's North. Chris Tapscott and Ben Mulongeni noted, in their study of the experiences of ex-combatants attempting to make it in Namibia's post-Independence economy that, 'For many "returnees" language is a serious impediment to

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<sup>2</sup> This competition has been made even more fierce as a great preponderance of 'push' factors, such as drought and loss of livelihood in Namibia's central 'reserve' areas have occurred and resulted in increased migration of individuals and families to Omaruru.

their re-entry to the wage employment. Many individuals speak a number of foreign and local, indigenous languages fluently but have a poor command over English and Afrikaans' (Tapscott and Mulongeni 1990:13). While Tapscott and Mulongeni's study concentrated on the situations encountered by ex-combatants, the linguistic difficulties discussed in this context hold true for the majority of migrants from Namibia's North. This phenomenon is largely due to a historical politicisation of language during Namibia's independence struggle. During this era, in Namibia's North, Afrikaans became highly associated with colonial rule and was, hence, deemed the language of the oppressor, while English was accepted as the language of a free and independent Namibia. In Owamboland, the centre of activity during the War of Independence, this preference was greatly asserted and those who were able to attend school in this region or in SWAPO refugee camps were taught in English, Portuguese or other languages and acquired no knowledge of Afrikaans. Many other residents of northern Namibia were entirely prevented from attending school as 'the war turned the region into a killing field' (Freeman, 1991:712).

In Omaruru today, while English is becoming ever more widely spoken, Afrikaans remains the most greatly utilised language between employers and employees. For this reason, language is often a serious impediment for those migrants, such as Paulus, who have learned neither Afrikaans *nor* English. Without this skill, communication with prospective employers is made infinitely more difficult if not impossible.

While the government has implemented projects aimed at training people from different levels of literacy up to a working knowledge of English and conducts courses free of charge, attendance of classes held in Omaruru is low. Several informants who could potentially benefit from participation but do not attend note practical reasons for abstaining such as, an inability to buy notebooks and a fear of walking home at night after classes. However, many also express a fundamental lack of motivation and faith in the value of such education based on the observation that even high school graduation does not guarantee a job in Namibia today.

A final phenomenon that is brought to light by Paulus' testimony, and one that was expressed numerous times by various informants from Namibia's North is the lack of food security that accompanies residence in Namibia's urban locales. Among Damara and Herero residents of Hakahana, a strategy is often enacted which involves return migration of certain



family members to reserve areas where food aid is being supplied by German aid organisations. It is also quite common for pensioners to move from rural areas to Omaruru to aid in supporting younger job seekers during periods of unemployment as well as to locate their families where working relatives can more easily provide them with food.

For most post-Independence migrants from Northern Namibia, however, such short-term demographic adjustments are made impossible due to the long distances between their places of origin and their places of destination. For them, familial connections are usually far more limited in the central areas and support networks are far less secure. As was the case with the death of Paulus' grandfather, underdeveloped support networks provide little security for these migrants and often push individuals into extended periods of hardship.

The high levels of unemployment further jeopardise migrants' maintenance of support systems as links with their places of origin are made more difficult, and limited access to money, and hence food, make sharing amongst neighbours and kinsmen largely impossible. In the North, the effects are also detrimental as, in many cases, young migrants are not able to return home and are no longer present to help in cultivation. This leaves young children and elderly persons to carry out food production activities alone, and further decreases levels of production and food security in the home areas. Not only is the prevalence of unemployment a major hindrance in the maintenance of rural/urban links and the maintenance of support systems within urban areas, but also a high rate of inflation (particularly on goods imported through international markets) and the stagnate or decreasing salaries paid to unskilled and semi-skilled workers, has led to a situation where even those who have jobs are barely able to live from one month to the next.

While business still looks relatively good for those who fill their combis and bakkis at Namibia's hitchhiking points, during the course of my 15 month stay, Namibia saw petrol prices increase on three different occasions with accompany price hikes for all means of travel. An additional factor which influences more permanent migration and decreases the frequency of circulation from Namibia's rural North to its Central towns and cities is the informal implementation of a two tiered pricing system dependent on direction of travel. A number of informants complained that, based on the assumption that those travelling from rural areas have less disposable cash income than those travelling from urban locations, the standard cost of travel in most semi-formally-operated *combis* was significantly higher for

the urban-to-rural route than it was for the route in the opposite direction. As last checked at the end of 1999, those prices were N\$50 (£5) for rural-to-urban travel from Oshakati to Omaruru and N\$80 (£8) in the reverse direction.

As has been demonstrated, there are various macro-level influences that promote and shape the patterns of migration in Namibia today. Because of historical determinants originating in the colonial institution of migrant labour and policies of unequal development, as well as economic actualities faced by Namibia's government and its citizens today, migration is enacted by individuals often partially in response to factors beyond their control. However, as will be discussed in the following section concerning micro and median level influences on migration, human agency also plays a significant role in the establishment and reproduction of patterns of migration as individuals both respond to and determine the changes that affect their lives.

### **Analysis of Micro and Median Level Influences on Migration in Namibia**

The following sections further investigate how and why migration is enacted by members of Hakahana's community who define themselves as Oshiwambo-speaking, Otjiherero-speaking and Damara-speaking Namibians. Focusing on links between their distinct histories under the organisation of apartheid rule and the patterns of migration which have emerged in post-Independence Namibia, these sections aim to demonstrate the complexity and variety of migratory patterns found in Hakahana today. Through the application of structuration theory and the use of specific case studies, it is possible to view the different forms of mobility witnessed, not only as responses by individuals to structural *constraints*, but also to *opportunities* provided. By examining the rationality and selectivity of migrants to Omaruru in light of the micro-social circumstances, these sections provide insight into how micro- and median-level determinants combine with those of the macro-level already discussed, to influence the individual's decision to stay or to migrate.

The following sections will explore the various causal factors for migration as they occur in the lives of Oshiwambo-, Damara-, and Otjiherero-speaking residents of Hakahana. It will examine their occurrence as a result of varying push and pull factors from both individual and communal influences and values. In the case of Owambo migration, another

dimension will be added to the analysis. Following Parnwell's suggestion that 'we need to be mindful of the circumstances which prevail in the areas from which migrants are moving, and in the areas upon which their movement is focused' (1993:77), I will also make use of data accumulated during my fieldwork in Northern Namibia to provide insight into the conditions existing in Owamboland that influence migration of Oshiwambo-speaking individuals to Namibia's central parts.

### **Owambo Migration to Omaruru**

As discussed previously, migration of Oshiwambo-speaking people to Namibia's central regions has historically been subject to macro-level constraints imposed and strengthened in the period of South African colonial rule. In the 1970s and 1980s, as the migrant labour system was liberalised and the residential control apparatus crumbled (Devereux 1995:29), patterns of migration of Oshiwambo-speaking people from Namibia's North to its central regions were greatly altered. Due to the dissolution of controls forcing mandatory circulation between the two aforementioned regions, the nature of migration began to shift, resulting in more permanent migration for many and movement of longer duration for others.

Reflecting on trends recognised in the previous chapter through an examination of Owambo people's history with migrant labour, such as the reinforcement of a cultural value on mobility and the ever-increasing strain caused by population growth in the northern regions, patterns of increased and lengthened migration come as no surprise. Speaking to Owambo migrants of this time period still residing in Omaruru today reveals that this migration, at the time, helped to successfully diversify their household economies in Owamboland, or at least absorb some of the burden of feeding adult members of their households. And, as employment opportunities were more abundant, said migrants were able to provide for their own livelihood while often managing to maintain flows of remittances to their families in Owamboland.

Today however, increased migration, resulting from changes brought about by Independence including the return of ex-combatants (promised jobs by Namibia's government after the liberation struggle) and the hopefulness and excitement that surrounded

the long-awaited reorganisation of oppressive power structures, has greatly altered the conditions in Omaruru and other central Namibian areas of destination.

The following case study is taken from an interview with an Oshiwambo-speaking man, age 35, who, unlike Paulus, migrated from northern Namibia to Omaruru in the 1980s before Namibian Independence. This case study highlights some of the reasons for migration, the changes experienced in Omaruru, and the problems resulting from the exponential growth of its migrant communities.

#### *Case Study 2 – Pre-Independence Migration/Post-Independence Changes*

*My name is Bonnie Titus. I was born in Oshikuku in 1964 and attended school there until grade 8. That is when I came here to Omaruru in 1983. I came because, you know, when we were kids we were hearing stories from the other people that in the central parts there is life and there are job opportunities and all that. I came to my uncle who was staying in the Damara location at the time, but he's Owambo. I stayed with him for three months and then I got a job at the factory that was making oil and butter, NAMSU. I worked there for a year and five months and after that I took a job at Nockler's Bottle Store where I worked for quite a few years. I won't remember how long. When I finished there, I went a few months without a job and then I got a job at a nearby farm and stayed there for about a year until I went to Otjiwarongo to take a job with Rossing mining graphite. That was around 1992. I was there until 1993 and then I came back to Omaruru because we mineworkers were laid off. That was when I started to make business at the squatters' camps. That was what I did until the municipality moved us here to Hakahana. Now I am busy struggling to get my business going again because moving from the other side to here has corrupted things. In the meantime, my other three brothers have moved here to Omaruru. They came a few years ago. One is working at Epako Lodge, the others are around here. One of my sisters is in Swakopmund, but my other 5 sisters are up in Owamboland. When I first came, pre-Independence, there were many job opportunities although we weren't being paid much. But, today, jobs are scarce. Before there were jobs at the mines and factories but, today, there are fewer jobs, and more and more people are coming from Owamboland to get the jobs. Today, I can't even help my parents when I go home. Today, I have to plan far in advance, a kind of long-term budget to think of what I will have to take when I go home. But it's too hard. It's just money that controls everything, so when you don't have that and you, you don't feel good.*

From Bonnie's story we gain an understanding of how migration from Owamboland takes place. Much like many people today who migrate directly to Omaruru, Bonnie came to a relative already established in the town, whereas earlier migrants tended to locate themselves in Omaruru after initially being sent to the town as migrant labourers. The subsequent migration of his brothers demonstrates the exponential growth patterns occurring in Omaruru's Owambo migrant community. This happens where initial migration of a



family or community member takes place, circulation is established, and over time the number of migrants either steadily or suddenly increases as the links between source and destination areas expand.

The other predominant pattern concerning how Owambo migrants have come to reside in Omaruru post Independence is through a process of what I term 'reverse hierarchical migration'. Rather than through the more common pattern of step (or hierarchical) migration, where a migrant tends to move progressively from smaller locations to ones of greater size, many Owambo migrants to Omaruru tend to begin their migration in larger cities. They often tend to find their way to Omaruru after brief periods of stay in medium-sized towns such as Otjiwarongo or Okahandja. Their residence in these towns often facilitates further migration to Omaruru as they receive news of a relative's existence there, or they hear encouraging information about employment opportunities. Some also tend to end up in Omaruru simply because they are not able to make it in the big city. In this way, smaller towns like Omaruru help to absorb some of the overflow of migration to Namibia's main destinations.

Returning to our analysis of Bonnie's case study, another common trend that is often observed among migrants from Namibia's North is the establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a survival strategy when no wage employment is to be found. While this phenomenon occurs largely in response to high unemployment rates and other economic conditions found in Omaruru, there is an added cultural impetus to this economic development. The proliferation of SMEs in Hakahana is not just coincidentally linked with the increased migration of Owambo Namibians. Rather, there is a high cultural value, particularly amongst Kwanyama-Owambo Namibians, placed on entrepreneurial employment and a self-ascribed notion of identity expressed that correlates being Kwanyama with having an aptitude for such employment. These perceptions of Kwanyama identity are most likely influenced by their pre-colonial trading practices with peoples of central and southern Namibia and, later, in South African colonialism's racist notions of biological determinism.<sup>3</sup> In addition to these factors, as a result of developments in the 1980's that saw the increased presence of the South African Defence Forces and then UNTAG (United

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout South African colonialism Namibia's various ethnic groups were thought to be endowed with certain aptitudes, usually of a biological nature, that predetermined their efficiency and ability to engage in particular forms of labour.

Nations Transition Advisory Group) observers, and hence, increased profits generated from extended patronage, the development of a 'bottle store bourgeoisie' made the aspiration of entrepreneurial success widespread (Freeman 1991:713). In post-Independence Namibia, while this economic activity has continued to generate profits for many small and medium business owners, due to the exodus of military clientele and a lack of employment opportunities for a growing urban population, the same financial opportunities do not exist.

Much as Devereux found throughout Namibia, what has resulted in Omaruru as a consequence of a lack of economic alternatives and the cultural influences mentioned above, is an underdeveloped informal sector with an over-emphasis on petty commodity trading (Devereux 1995:36). The amount of such economic activity present in Hakahana, according to observations made during my field research, is exceedingly high. And, while Bonnie was able to manage a quite prosperous business in the former squatters' camps on the border to the Herero section of Omaruru's black township in the early 90s, the chances of finding such prosperity in a business located in Hakahana today are not nearly so good. Due to the high density of such establishments in Hakahana, with over forty-two places of business among approximately four hundred housing plots, and a formal unemployment rate of seventy-five per cent among adult residents<sup>4</sup>, the chances for the economic success of any small-scale enterprise are dubious.

Another element highlighted by Bonnie's case study is the predominance of 'pull' factors that encourage migration to Omaruru and other central Namibian towns and cities. Bonnie's success in acquiring employment in the years prior to Independence and his testimony concerning the changing conditions in Omaruru post-Independence, however, indicate a dramatic shift in economic opportunities available to migrants over time, particularly in the years following Independence. These changes have resulted as increased competition with returning PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) fighters and other recent migrants have coincided with Namibia's continuing economic recession and the restructuring of its industrial and agricultural sectors.

Despite increasing hardship faced by migrants attempting to locate themselves in Omaruru, informants' testimonies, as well as data accumulated from source areas in Namibia's North, indicate a continued commitment to the social practice of migration as an

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<sup>4</sup> These figures are based on a survey I conducted in Hakahana in January 1999.

activity closely linked with the exercise of personal freedoms. The continued popularity of migration in light of these changes in opportunities found in destination areas suggests that, despite growing awareness of the increasingly unfavourable conditions, micro-level trends in migration have yet to be altered by the post-Independence transition of Namibia's economy.

Findings from the North show that, besides the personal motivation of enjoying and engaging in Namibia's new-found independence, another element influencing continued migration of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians can be found in Namibia's past. The high value historically placed on mobility, that once ensured the participation of young Owambo men in systems of tribute labour and later secured their contribution to household economies through *migrant* labour, appears now to serve as a 'pull' factor that contributes to depopulation in rural Owamboland and over-urbanisation throughout Namibia.

**Table 4.1 Owambo Migration Causes and Effects:  
Findings from Omusati Focus Group Sessions**

Value	'Push' and 'Pull' Factors of Migration	Times Mentioned (Out of 8)	Value	Consequences of Migration	Times Mentioned (Out of 8)
+	Employment	8	-	Shortage of Food	5
+	Education	6	+	Can Support Family	4
+	Better Housing	5	-	Crime	3
+	Better Medical Facilities	4	-	Lack of Accommodation	3
+	Life is easier in central parts	3	-	Health Problems	2
o	Curiosity	3	-	Men Leave Women/Wives	2
+	Better Entertainment	2	-	Unemployment	2
o	Now free to move	2	-	Increase in Birth-rate	2
o	Join Boyfriend/Husband	2	-	Leave Children and Go	2
+	Higher Salaries	1	-	Marriage Suffers/Men Stray	2
+	Better Shopping	1	-	Depopulation of Rural Area	1
+	Make business connections	1	-	Upset Male/Female Ratio	1
o	Visit and decide to stay	1	-	Pollution	1
-	War	1	+	Receive Better Education	1
-	Drought	1	+	Better Communication	1
-	Shamed if educated and stay home	1	+	Learn how to make business	1
			+	Eat Better Food	1

Table 4.1 demonstrates findings from eight focus group sessions conducted in Onesi, Ombome, Okomaquia, Uuhongo, and Eenjokwe, five villages in Northern Namibia's Omusati region. These groups consisted of an average of eight informants of varying ages

ranging from 15 to 80. Approximately 70 per cent of participants were female and 30 per cent were male. The occupations of the informants ranged from students to teachers, to those who were formally unemployed but tending family crops or working in the informal sector. The high concentration of pull factors (+) and, otherwise neutral factors (o) that influence migration indicate that there is still a high cultural and social value placed on migration. Information accumulated also suggests that migration is still seen as a tool in a quest for upward mobility, even if this elevated economic status is not considered a probable outcome. The high concentration of negative *effects* (-) listed by informants indicate a pattern wherein, for the majority of people, migration is enacted not upon purely logical, proven considerations for economic prosperity but, rather, more in hopes of being able to manipulate the dubious existing opportunities to one's own advantage. Some of these hopes, and the migration patterns they encourage, are based in the continuation of cultural trends that have normalised this process.

Amongst the participants of the focus groups conducted, there was a discernible divide between opinions of those who were younger and those who were older. Younger informants tended to express more optimistic views towards the social practice of migration, despite the acknowledgement of many harmful effects, while older informants consistently focused on the detrimental effects migration has on their ability to manage agricultural and pastoral activities at the homestead. Specifically, there was great dismay expressed over patterns developing after Independence where greater numbers of Owambo youth were fleeing the North and shirking responsibilities to the household economy of the homestead to go 'sit in the shade' in Namibia's urban locations. Accompanying these concerns was a noted lack of control over the social actions, and hence, the labour power of younger household members. The exodus of young, able-bodied males that occurred with great frequency as an initial response to Namibian Independence, and the continued flow of migrants in the years that followed, has perpetuated the depopulation of Owamboland and greatly hindered generational relations. The resulting situation is one where, despite concentrated macro-level attempts by Namibia's independent government to provide education for youth within Namibia's previously underdeveloped northern regions, children of primary school age are heavily relied upon for cultivation and herding activities and are often prevented by their families from regularly attending school. The crippling social



effects are then easily extended from one generation to the next as the absence of the adult labour of one generation, due to migration, hinders the educational prospects for the next. An additional negative consequence of migration that was voiced by more mature members of the focus groups was the increasing responsibility of childcare being placed on parents of migrants.

From the perspective of younger informants, migration, despite the known hardships, is perceived as the only option that allows for the possibility of enjoying the elevated living standards and 'western' conveniences that are known of and desired in even the most remote rural areas. The desire to experience what lies beyond the village, coupled with the hope of finding employment and increasing one's status through providing money and material goods to one's family, are overall, the most predominant pull factors that appear to perpetuate migration. As indicated in Table 4.1, the perceived ability to support one's family was mentioned with a frequency second only to the negative effect of food shortage and was the only positive consequence of migration to be repeatedly mentioned by the members of four of the eight separate focus groups.

Despite the intentions to maintain links with relatives and lives in Owamboland, there are a number of factors which lead to the weakening or even dissolution of such links. As was discussed earlier in an examination of the macro level, the economic realities faced in Omaruru and other central Namibian destinations have begun to impede the maintenance of urban to rural links. As Bonnie's case study exemplifies, even *visits* to Owamboland become difficult undertakings. What is particularly interesting for our micro-level examination of this process is the cultural and economic expectations that surround 'the visit'. In a historical examination of the 1948-1952 famine that occurred in Owamboland, Meredith McKittrick highlights the Owambo cultural expectations of gifts and remittances that accompany 'visits'. She goes on to suggest that, based on migrants' reluctance to lend support to wives and mothers petitioning them from Owamboland, the networks of interaction and reciprocity at that time had already begun to break down.

Based on the findings of my research in both Omaruru and Owamboland, there still remain heavy cultural expectations of financial assistance upon the return of Owambo migrants to their home areas. As Bonnie explained, the scheduling of return visits to Owamboland often becomes an onerous task as it requires long-term planning and the

accumulation of money and goods that are otherwise not in surplus. For some, through the good fortune of finding and maintaining a good paying job, channelling remittances is not as burdensome, particularly when, through initial savings and investment, migrants are able to help their relatives in Owamboland open village-based *cuca* shops<sup>5</sup> or shabeens. Through this initial investment, the family is often able to generate profits independent of a migrant's salary.<sup>6</sup> For many migrants just managing to survive on meagre salaries or no salary at all, however, the maintenance of urban-rural links becomes too burdensome and visits are undertaken seldom, or not at all.

In Omaruru, only 38 per cent of people surveyed had visited Owamboland within the last year while 58 per cent had stayed in Omaruru even through the Christmas holidays – a particularly popular time of year to return home. While this is true, only 40 per cent of Owambo Namibians surveyed considered Omaruru to be 'home'. A third category is comprised of migrants who attempt to locate themselves in central Namibian towns and cities, but, due to their inability to acquire jobs or establish themselves within a communal support network, return to Owamboland on a more permanent basis.

Through the accounts of informants of the various focus groups conducted in the North, it is apparent that a knowledge of trends in migration experienced in destination areas has made its way back to Owamboland's source areas and is a catalyst for increasingly divided inter-generational relations. No longer is migration considered to be an economically strategic activity for young Owambo males, and one that is encouraged with little exception. Rather, young people are selectively encouraged by their elders based on the current knowledge of difficulties awaiting them in destination areas and an understanding of the benefits of linguistic and educational training in acquiring employment. For this reason, one of the only 'push' factors visible through my research in the North is towards those educated through secondary school, and is enacted through positive (encouragement) and negative (scorning or shaming) social measures that influence the migration of these youths. For most incidents of migration, however, the historically established cultural value and motivations for mobility along with the exercise of freedoms now allowed conflicts with the

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<sup>5</sup> A *cuca* shop is a small establishment that sells petty commodities and basic food products, and sometimes, additionally alcoholic beverages.

<sup>6</sup> However, often these financial undertakings remain an economic and time-consuming burden to a migrant through his need to supply and stock said businesses and deal generally with other banking and management concerns.

best interests of household economies. This places the present generations in a predicament where the transitional nature of Owamboland's social and economic realms is played out in a generational struggle that occurs on the micro level within Owambo households and communities.

This section has dealt primarily with an examination of micro-social influences on male migration as they occur within the parameters of post-Independence Namibian society. It has highlighted the fact that, beyond the factor of economic motivation previously thought to explain micro-level influences on the patterns of migration, there are also strong cultural and personal motivations involved. The following section will now turn to an examination of the migration of female Owambo Namibians. It will examine female migration not only undertaken in different patterns by women, but also as it results from and influences the maintenance of household economies of Northern Namibia. In a similar attempt as was made in the examination of male migration, it will also focus on the personal motivations beyond economic survival or prosperity and analyse the potential effects of migration on gender relations and prospects for female autonomy.

### **Female Migration and Gender Relations**

In chapter 3, the historical restraint and prohibition of women's movement was discussed as a consequence of colonial policies involving patriarchy and containment. Today, while all macro-level control of women's movement has ceased, on the micro and median levels, highly dichotomised gender roles persist and historical practices continue to influence and legitimate present patterns of male-dominated migration. This section addresses the interplay between these existing values and the circumstances they create through the application of a household strategies approach. Chant and Radcliffe suggest that, rather than viewing migration as a purely economic decision based on differential labour opportunities between rural and urban locales, it is necessary to take into account 'the extent to which female population mobility is constrained by social and cultural constructions of gender' (1992:7). For this reason, it becomes most efficient to examine female migration through the household strategies approach which addresses not only economic concerns of the

household, but also the cultural and historical influences that shape and determine patterns of migration. As Chant and Radcliffe explain,

In rural households...migration arises not only because of the inability of [subsistence agriculture] to satisfy livelihood requirements, but because gender divisions of labour within the household release certain members while retaining others. The household or domestic unit is...a social institution which organises resources (land, labour, tools, capital and so on) and recruits and allocates labour in a combination of reproductive and productive tasks. Gender divisions of labour are crucial to this pattern of livelihood and provide a basic template for household decisions about who will migrate and who will stay. (Chant and Radcliffe 1992:22-23)

In the course of my fieldwork in Namibia's North, involving the collection of data from a number of focus groups consisting of upper secondary school students, teachers or community members from rural villages in the Omusati region, it was revealed that, while patterns are shifting, migration and indeed mobility beyond the confines of Owamboland in general, is still perceived as a predominantly male activity. The inverse of this trend is that women continue to be culturally bound to historically established roles as the bearers of 'tradition', and indelibly linked with activities of cultivation and household management. The preservation of tradition for which they are thought to be responsible, as well as the task of producing food to feed the next generation, are activities that bind women to the land and restrict their lives and their mobility.

Despite such strong cultural determinants, women have also been managing to transform tradition. In the years shortly prior to and following Independence, they have done so by establishing patterns of autonomous and 'follow-up' migration that provide them with alternatives to fulfilling the prescribed roles that remain as practical strategies today, but also as legacies of both pre-colonial Owambo and South African colonialism's patriarchal practices. While the dissolution of macro-level controls over women's movement has been a great catalyst in their increased mobility, micro-level responses to changing relations between men and women and changing educational and economic opportunities have also had a significant influence.

In the approximately ten years prior to Namibian Independence in 1990, and, in the years that have followed, the rate of female migration from Namibia's North has been on the rise. For Owambo women, as well as men, Independence, along with the dismantling of oppressive economic and social policies of Namibia's former government caused a trend of



increased mobility and the desire to exercise freedoms once suppressed. For Owambo women, however, this increased mobility signifies more than the continuation of long-developing trends based on such a desire, but is also an indication of shifting gender and generational relations within changing Owambo cultures and communities.

The following sections, beginning with an examination of the rates and patterns found in women's migration further address how and why female mobility occurs within Namibia today.

### *Rates and Patterns in Female Migration*

The data I accumulated in a survey of 86 Owambo households<sup>7</sup> within Hakahana, including 50 surveys of Owambo women, suggest that, female migration to Omaruru is, indeed, increasing. According to the results, 52 per cent of females surveyed migrated since Independence, while 36 per cent migrated just within the five years prior to March, 1999. As well, the same percentage of Owambo women who migrated within the five years prior to 1999 (36%), migrated over the span of ten years leading up to Independence. And, only 6 per cent of female Owambo migrants migrated more than twenty years prior to my survey.

While this appears to indicate a significant increase in female migration undertaken recently, these numbers possibly reflect other trends that are worth mentioning as well. First, they may reflect a trend wherein many Owambo migrants who have resided in Omaruru for more than one generation occupy more permanent housing in Omaruru's main black township, Ozondje. Secondly, they may be influenced by a trend of circular migration which eventually places many Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians in Owamboland at the end of what can even be a term of lifetime employment or residence in Namibia's central parts. All this considered, however, the increase in female migration from pre to post-Independence found in Hakahana is compatible with information provided by numerous interviewees concerning the increasing rates of Owambo migration to Omaruru. As well, it corresponds with Devereux's assessment of recent trends in Namibia's urbanisation that find that, 'Predominant in this...process have been younger men from the densely populated northern

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<sup>7</sup> 'Households' include all individuals living on one housing plot sharing food and other resources. The average number of people living in Owambo households within Hakahana was 4.25.

Communal Areas, but the proportion of families and women has increased as short term male contract labour declined' (1995:29).

**Table 4.2 Results of Random Survey of Owambo Households in Hakahana, Omaruru**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Migrated to Join Family/Friends ('Follow Up' Migration)	42%	85%
Migrated Autonomously	58%	15%
Consider Omaruru 'Home'	37%	42%
Consider Owamboland 'Home'	55%	44%
Uncertain Where to Call 'Home'	8%	14%

What is also discernible from statistical data collected in Hakahana, as well as data collected from focus groups conducted in Owamboland, is the varying nature of male and female migration. 85 per cent of female Owambo migrants reported to have migrated to join either family, a husband, or a boyfriend. And only 15 per cent reported to have migrated autonomously. While only 42 per cent of Owambo males reported to have migrated to join family or friends, and 58 per cent reported to have migrated autonomously. Although, today, men more frequently migrate to join family or friends than in previous times, there is still a high rate of autonomous migration enacted by more recent male migrants. This trend is supported by attitudes and beliefs that were prominent in focus groups sessions in Namibia's North that surround the harsh realities faced by migrants when attempting to relocate to Namibia's central parts. Autonomous migration was consistently regarded as an activity that was dangerous and required the ability to survive in extremely harsh circumstances if necessary. It was thought that this made it an activity better suited for men than for women.

Not only are the circumstances that surround men and women's migration different, but their patterns of circulation versus permanent migration reveal a number of discrepancies based in gender roles and practices. My survey of Hakahana residents indicates that women have an overall greater tendency to consider Omaruru home or to express uncertainty about their attachments to either Omaruru or their home areas. 42 per cent of women reported to now call Omaruru home and 44 per cent continued to consider Owamboland home, while 14

percent were no longer sure where to call 'home'. For men, a measure of these same trends showed that only 36 per cent considered Omaruru home, while 55 percent still considered Owamboland home, and 8 per cent were not sure where to call 'home'. Of the women and men who considered Owamboland home, 59 per cent of women and only 40 per cent of men visited Owamboland within the last year. As well, a greater percentage of those women who weren't sure where to call home still continued to visit Owamboland.

So, while overall fewer women than men continued to consider Owamboland home, 44 per cent of all women surveyed and only 31 per cent of all men surveyed visited Owamboland within the last year. These results suggest that, while women are more likely to make permanent their migration to Omaruru, they also tend to be more committed to sustaining ties with home areas through regular maintenance of urban-rural links. Brydon and Chant suggest that this may relate to the fact that children are often being reared in home areas (1989:132). However, Chant and Radcliff postulate it may also have to do with 'the widespread observation that women attach more importance to the family than men and/or are expected to do so within the general framework of kinship obligations' (1992:17). Unfortunately, as is discussed in the coming section on household economies, the links that women maintain, rather than being financially beneficial to households within northern Namibia, often cause additional strain. This happens as children are sent to family members in the North to be reared, but remittances are seldom channelled to these caretakers.

### *Motivations for Female Migration*

Having addressed *how* female migration to Omaruru is occurring, let us now turn to the question of *why*. Based on findings from interviews conducted with female migrants to Hakahana there do appear to be obvious trends in women's motivations for migration. Some motivations appear to have shifted over time, while others remain from one generation to the next. The most widespread changes in migration for women have occurred as a result of the discontinuation of state control over their mobility. The dismantling of the residential control apparatus in the early 1970s left women subject only to micro and median level controls at a time when war was already beginning to redefine social norms and practices. In the midst of these changes there arose opportunities whereby young women slowly began to

redefine their relationships with men, their positions in the household economy, and their identities within a developing Namibian nation-state.

Many of Omaruru's older female Owambo migrants who migrated prior to Independence testify to viewing their migration from Owamboland as an event that provided an escape from the harsh daily rigors of rural life, and/or the strict social restraints which accompanied such living. Far from being purely economically based, earlier incidents of women's migration often occurred as results of significant life changes following such events as divorce or unwanted child birth for example.

Chant and Radcliffe have addressed this phenomenon of women's migration by noting that women in rural areas generally face greater family-related social and economic constraints than their male counterparts and may accordingly view mobility as a way out (1992:16). Referring to work on Africa, Thadani and Todaro note that 'migration from village to city offers women an escape – an escape from their traditional, ascribed status, perhaps an escape from obedience to male kinsmen, and from a life of exceedingly hard work' (1984: 45). While migrants relocated in a manner which did not disregard financial considerations, their stories imply that there were also personal motivations involved which included the desire to elude cultural constraints that placed them at the mercy of male relatives and husbands, and an accompanying desire for autonomy

The following case studies highlight this trend and others. They are taken from two women migrants to Omaruru who relocated themselves from Owamboland to Namibia's central parts in the 1970s.

### *Case Study 3: Early Owambo Female Migration – Continuity and Change*

*My name is Julia Amteta. I was born in 1939, in Nantai, in Owamboland, and grew up there. My mother died when I was twelve years old, so I lived with my father helping him in the garden until I got a boyfriend and moved to Ondangwa with him. I stayed with him until I had brought birth of four children and then we started fighting. He was being too naughty, beating me too much, and we couldn't understand each other anymore. We split up, and then there was no life up there to go forward. I was hopeless and I wanted to go look for a job. I wanted to visit my family too. That was the time I came down here and brought my children with me. It was 1972 when I came here to the townships. I decided to move to Walvis Bay because my family was there. I got a job there at a fish factory, but later I had problems with asthma and came to live with an elder man, like a father, here in Omaruru. He was a man from Okwanyama, same as me. I moved here in 1979. Later I went back up to Owamboland to build a place where my children could live so they could stay up there. My brother took care of them. I wanted them to know Owamboland. You know that this is not*



our town. Our home is up there. I did that so that they could look after our home. It's their future home. They still stay there now. They are growing mahango<sup>8</sup> when the rain is raining. We are facing many problems today, I don't have a job, but I am struggling with my crops here and my daughter is looking for a job. But I can say, if I were having a good husband who could have taken care of me, and if my children were having a good father that would look after them so that they could pass through their education, then I shouldn't have sat down here today like this.

#### *Case Study 4: Early Owambo Female Migration – Escape and Human Agency*

*My name is Ndahambelela Nauyoma. I was born in Nepandola, Owamboland in 1947. My mother died in childbirth after having me, so I lived with my father. He took me out of school when I was just starting and made me look after cattle. I did that up until I was married traditionally. With that man I had a child. Then, in 1977, I divorced my husband and moved to Omaruru with another man who was coming here to build bridges. I divorced my husband because I wanted to face my own truth. I didn't want the husband, but my father made me marry. I wanted to have my own freedom to decide who I was. After I divorced him I moved back to my father's house until I found the man who brought me here. But that man died about ten years ago and since then I have been left alone like this. By that man I had three more children. But one of my daughter's died in a fire. When the family came down from Owamboland for the funeral we talked but we did not understand each other. They wanted to take all my kids back to Owamboland because the first one died. They said, 'Oh, you are busy down there throwing our nation away'. They think Omaruru is a bad place. They were pointing to the side of magic. They think Omaruru is a bad place and all the relatives will get finished here. The story was not only directed to my children, but to all the relatives that were here. They took the rest of the children who were here, but I wouldn't let them take my children. I stayed here because, you know, you cannot consider home two places. So I made my house here and I can't go back to Owamboland and make my house there as they want. But all those things I have pointed to have not changed my life, thrown my life away or brought me up to this point. The only thing that has done that is the death of my daughter. I am a grieving mother. I have become a woman because I have felt that pain in my heart.*

These examples of early female migration demonstrate women's attempts to access greater opportunities beyond village life in Owamboland and to negotiate new identities and opportunities in a changing Namibia. The neglected or failed relationships that both women chose to leave behind were not uncommon and were often consequent of widespread conflict in male-female relations that is argued to have arisen greatly as a result of migrant labour (McKittrick 1997).

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<sup>8</sup> Millet, the staple crop most often grown and consumed in Owamboland.

For both women migration was an opportunity to claim control over their lives and relationships. Interestingly, however, despite the almost rebellious nature of their migrations, both women continued to maintain close ties with relatives in Owamboland. This illustrates the common trend in female migration that suggests women are most likely to maintain links to home areas when possible (Brydon and Chant 1989:132). As well, it indicates that, despite the limited number of Owambo women who opted to migrate in the years directly following the uplifting of the macro-level ban, within Owamboland, female migration was to some degree a socially sanctioned practice. Indeed, considering the limited economic opportunities within Owamboland in the 1970s, the decreasing availability of remittances, and the deterioration of gender relations, Julia and Ndahambeleta were very likely pioneers in an effort to establish new avenues of autonomy for women and new parameters for the social and cultural conventions that governed male-female relationships.

### *Effects of Female Migration on Gender Relations*

Data collected from my fieldwork in northern Namibia indicates that female migration has continued use as a strategy in redefining the norms of traditional systems of marriage and female dependency that developed throughout colonialism. However, rather than serving most frequently as an escape mechanism from troubled relationships and oppressive micro and median level restraints, today it is also a means by which women are proactively attempting to determine the nature of their relationships with men and redefine their opportunities in the context of post-Independence Namibian society.

The conflict between men and women, and the need for restructuring male and female social roles and economic opportunities is thought to have arisen as patterns of extended male migration and increased female dependency coincided. As men began staying progressively longer periods of time in Namibia's central parts there also developed a pattern of establishing second house relationships (CASS and NDT 1994) with women residing in work areas.<sup>9</sup> This was a development of migrant labour that had detrimental effects for all women involved as the meagre salaries paid to migrant labourers were easily

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<sup>9</sup> A Second House Relationship in this context is defined as 'the permanent living together of a woman with a man who is married to another woman under civil law. The man is not considered to be separated from his first wife who lives somewhere else, with or without children' (CASS and NDT 1994:21).

consumed by the maintenance of one household, and very seldom sufficient for the upkeep of two. Not only did men's participation in migrant labour create a shortage of labour power in Owamboland, it also left women in both source *and* destination areas vulnerable to financial neglect, which inevitably came to one household or the other.

This pattern of establishing second house relationships had dual effects of causing financial hardship for women, and also posing problems of an ideological nature that stemmed from the adoption of Christian notions of nuclear families and life-long marriage (McKittrick 1997:268). A continued concern surrounding second house relationships was documented in a study conducted in Owamboland in 1994. Informants expressed continued dismay over the existence of this trend in male-female relationships and indicated there was shame associated with a husband's decision to establish such a relationships (CASS and NDT 1994:44). In Omaruru there was much evidence of the continued presence of this practice. Within the life histories of Owambo and Damara women it was often revealed that informants had conducted relationships and most often co-habitated and had children with Oshiwambo-speaking men who would later return to their wives and families in Owamboland.

Considering the financial and emotional detriment to women that results from these developments, it is no surprise that my research in Owamboland revealed an overwhelming concern with the effects of migration on men's and women's relationships. Table 4.1 demonstrates that a considerable number of the negative effects thought to result from migration concern the maintenance of male-female relationships and marriages. Among these concerns are that migration, a) causes men to leave their girlfriends or wives to begin relationships in destination areas, b) causes an increase in the birth-rate due to the maintenance of relationships both in Owamboland and in the central parts, c) causes men to cheat on women and is detrimental to marriages, and d) causes an imbalance in Owamboland's male-female ratio due to the greater number of males and smaller number of females that participate.

In addition to this information, informants in Namibia's North stated that the primary reason for women's migration that occurs today is to find a husband with formal employment. Migration is thought to be necessary in finding such partners as most gainfully employed Owambo men are thought to be located in Namibia's townships. Female

migration is also thought to provide a solution to the problem of second house relationships as it discouraged the development of such relationships through the cohabitation of marital partners.

While marriage amongst my informants in northern Namibia was still thought to possess a high cultural value today, whom to marry and when to marry, particularly for marriages between Owambo people living outside of Owamboland, were thought to be decisions most likely made by the two individuals involved. A significant shift in ideas surrounding the nature and utility of marriage was apparent as informants acknowledged the effects Namibia's Independence has had on social relations between men and women. Older informants, in particular, explained the difference between their generation and the next as one stemming from the fact that Namibians are now 'free' and men and women alike are beginning to forsake traditional practices that, while restrictive, provided order. Discourse surrounding Namibia's liberation struggle was often enmeshed with generational arguments about newly developing patterns of marriage and migration. For older informants, the freedom that was gained through Independence, while considered a great accomplishment for Namibia's liberators, was thought to be being abused by Namibia's youth today. Women of younger generations indicated, however, that the liberation that has come to Namibia is tied up in their human right to be free and was a life-altering, positive change that has provided them with greater possibilities in choosing marital partners, in enabling them to migrate and, ultimately, in giving them control over their own lives and destinies. Contrary to the patriarchal practices of men choosing wives and the entire process being decided by elder relatives, it was expressed that newly forming patterns of marriage based in love were desirable, as marriages begun in romance contained the hope of greater equality. It was also thought that the freedom to migrate, if desired, helps to free women from expectations to cultivate their husbands' families' land and helps to assure them ownership of property they would come to possess over the course of a marriage.<sup>10</sup>

It was also thought that migration prior to marriage, while it does not ensure freedom from mobility restrictions, reduces the chances that a woman's movement will be controlled by her husband. One of the greatest disadvantages expressed by women concerning marriage within Owamboland was that, while a wife was not necessarily consulted about her

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<sup>10</sup> Under Owambo traditional law all property accumulated during marriage belongs to the husband, and upon his death, is the legal property of his family (CASS and NDT 1994).



husband's decision to migrate, a woman's migration could be, and often was, prohibited by her husband. It was indicated that this occurred particularly when individuals met and married within Owamboland. It is easy to gather from this information how migration prior to marriage, and indeed, often in search of a husband, becomes an important and logical manoeuvre in evading patriarchal control over women's movements. In this scenario it becomes less likely that the mobility of the woman will be governed by micro and median-level expectations of the family and village.

This section and the previous section provide insight into the phenomenon of migration as it is enacted today by both male and female Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians. It has dealt with the causes and effects of migration facilitated predominately by 'pull' factors surrounding changing economic and social opportunities in post-Independence Namibia. The following section addresses migration of Damara- and Otjiherero-speaking Namibians to Omaruru today as it occurs, in contrast, most frequently as a result of environmental and political 'push' factors encountered in central communal areas.

### **Migration of Damara and Herero Namibians**

The concern of this section is predominantly to compare and contrast the situation of Damara and Herero migrants to that of Owambo migrants. In reality, however, most who migrate to Omaruru today from other reserve areas or farms do not consider themselves to be migrants to the town. Rather, they consider themselves to have established residence in Omaruru through the town's inclusion in a circuit of generally two or more locations between which they have circulated over the courses of their lifetimes. Whereas only 39 per cent of Owambo people surveyed in 1999 considered Omaruru to be home, 84 per cent of Damara and 68 per cent of Herero people referred to Omaruru in such a manner. Their historical relationship with the town and the existence of familial networks position them within its social spheres, as well as in their own conceptions of belonging, not as migrants, but as townspeople who, like those who have never left, call Omaruru 'home'.

However, since Independence, with the exodus of large numbers of white farm owners, and the increased incidence of drought in Omatjete and Okombahe and other surrounding reserve areas, there *has* been an increase of settlement within Omaruru amongst

these populations. Although some have come to live with family already established in Omaruru, due to the shortage of permanent housing structures in the township and the already overcrowded households throughout Ozondje, many who now migrate are forced to live in Hakahana upon their arrival.

For Damara individuals and families, most have well-developed kinship and social networks within the town, and if these are weak, they are soon developed through the asking around and subsequently discovering common genealogies between themselves and others. In the past, these networks and the act of networking itself were far more beneficial to Damara individuals. However, most informants today indicate that, since Independence, and the subsequent onset of macro-level hardships described above, these networks have broken down. Additionally, those who have jobs are now over-burdened with requests from near and distant relatives for financial assistance or assistance in finding employment. This occurs as the long-developed micro-level systems of reciprocity are effectively disabled by a decrease in salaries and job opportunities within the formal sector. For Herero individuals, these kinship ties also exist, however, they remain slightly more effective as the historical diversification of incomes in Namibia's cattle industry and in formal employment make the manipulation of financial and social resources today slightly more possible.

In any case, both Damara and Herero migrants to Omaruru generally undertake relocation to the town as a result of dismissal from employment on white-owned farms or the inability to further sustain themselves or their families in reserve areas plagued by drought. The following case study of Cecelia, a 44 year old Herero woman who migrated to Omaruru one year prior to her interview in 1999, demonstrates some of these recent trends mentioned above.

#### *Case Study 5 – Drought, Hardship and Migration*

*I was born here in Omaruru in 1955. I grew up here at a farm called Eratengwa. We were staying at those farms because my parents were working there. I was staying there with my parents and my grandparents. It was good times then because the rain was raining in those days and my grandmother and mother were also milking the cows of the people they were working for. After that, my grandmother was sick and my uncle was pensioned, so that was the time we moved from the farm and we went to Omatjete. I was already an adult then. That was just a couple years after Independence. I came here to Omaruru just last year. I met my boyfriend here while I was coming and searching for jobs. But I didn't find a job, so I'm just trying to do this sewing work. I have left my family at the reserve in Omatjete, my uncle and his children. They are getting drought relief food, so it is better for them to stay*

*there. They don't have much livestock left though. We were having a lot of livestock, but the drought has killed them. Omatjete was wonderful when the rains were good, but at the reserve, it is a place where people are staying with cattle. If you don't have cattle, you must go and try to find your livelihood somewhere else. So I have come here to Omaruru...I have some family there in the Herero location, but they are just giving me little. They are struggling to. We are all facing hard times. The land is failing now. I am not planning anything because maybe when that time comes, I will be dead.*

Cecelia's recent migration to Omaruru due to the great depletion of livestock within the past 5 to 10 years is a common story of Herero migrants to Omaruru. Her long-term connection to the town, having been born there and growing up on a nearby farm, places Omaruru within a network of locations between which she and most Herero and Damara residents alike, move throughout their lifetimes. The move that her family undertook when her uncle was pensioned from the farm a few years after Independence is also an example of what is a common occurrence in the life histories of Damara and Herero informants. In these events, the discontinuation of employment on white-owned farms generally results in a relocation of not only the individual farm workers, but also their families. The ability of these families and workers to subsist on accumulated cattle holdings at the reserve is a situation that has been greatly altered in recent years. No longer able to maintain these accumulations, food security within the reserves is decreased and many younger individuals choose to try their luck at acquiring waged employment in smaller, nearby towns like Omaruru. This pattern of *step* or *hierarchical migration* is particularly prevalent now as the farming and cattle-rearing industries fail.

Overall, Damara and Herero migration to Omaruru is occurring at an increasing rate, but in contrast to Owambo migration, it occurs largely as a result of a great preponderance of 'push' factors. As observed in Cecelia's narrative, because of the economically unworkable or undesirable situation they leave upon migrating, and their greater encounters with structural constraints that have convinced them to move, many express a great sense of hopelessness concerning the economic, ecological and political future of the country. In this way and in the fact that their presence in Omaruru further increases competition for limited jobs, their migration, much as it signifies growing problems within Namibia, also tends to perpetuate others. Their presence in Hakahana, and, indeed, the very creation of Hakahana in response to higher rates of migration, are the results of a transformation of Namibia's social, economic and political realms. And while life in the settlement is driven by this context, it

also has the effect of producing a context both within its boundaries and beyond. The following chapters further explore how the effects of migration, transition, and the incorporation of difference within the neighbourhood of Hakahana work to create such contexts in Namibia today.



## Chapter Five

### **Wrestling with the Past, Bargaining for the Future: Negotiating Difference in Hakahana**

Like most Namibian towns, Omaruru has undergone many significant changes since Independence. While all of Namibia has been affected by the country's shift from South African rule to that of a new and independent government, Namibia's towns and cities have arguably experienced most dramatically the consequences of an ideological shift from ethnic and racial separatism to one of unity in diversity. Daily, within the walls of its establishments, its churches, and on its streets, Omaruru's citizens can be observed defining, negotiating and legitimising their identities in a new Namibian nation. Factors such as increased migration, economic decline, and joblessness cause greater destabilisation and uncertainty in these processes as people wrestle with their pasts and bargain for their futures.

This chapter, continuing from the previous chapter's discussion of the shifting causes and consequences of increased internal migration in post-Independence Namibia, examines more closely the creation and transformation of social, economic and political life within Hakahana. It addresses the effects of increased migration on the social and economic realms within Omaruru, focussing in on the challenges these shifts create to the formation and maintenance of identity and 'community' within Hakahana.

Because Hakahana's three most sizeable populations are of Damara, Owambo and Herero Namibians, constituting respectively 35, 33 and 12 per cent, or together, 80 per cent of its overall population, this chapter focuses on these three populations and their interaction as it is most central to community life within Hakahana.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with an examination of the applicability of theories of 'race' and 'ethnicity' in a historical introduction to identity formation among Damara-, Otjiherero- and Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, this chapter proceeds by arguing the need for a more all-encompassing problematisation of difference in the analysis of identity politics in Namibia today. It explores the convergence of race, culture and class in post-Independence Namibia resulting from people's economic and social positioning at the time of Independence and the options and challenges they face as a result

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<sup>1</sup> Not addressing the other 20 percent which is comprised of 7% Coloured, 7% Kavango, 3% Nama, 2% Himba and 1% Chimbundu (from Angola), is in response to the limitation of the author's fieldwork. This decision was made in order to provide better, more coherent and concise analysis of the creation of social life within the settlement.

of the transformation of Namibia's social, economic and political realms. It then proceeds to explore the patterns found in micro-level narratives of Hakahana's residents and their interplay with historical and present-day formations of identity. Through this it highlights lived experience as an essential determinant in the creation of new patterns of difference within Namibia, and begins to demonstrate the ways Hakahana's residents' 'constructions of the past form a "debating hall" in which different moral visions of community are contested' (Berman and Lonsdale 1992).

### **The Making of Difference: From Past Formations of Identity to Contemporary Politics**

Much as in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa, Namibia's colonial history was one of conquest and exploitation of the country's indigenous peoples based on pre-conceived notions of racial inequality. From early encounters with missionaries, through nearly three decades of German colonialism, to the South African Administration's implementation of a formal system of apartheid, race and ethnicity became progressively more determinant factors in the creation of Namibia's social, political and economic landscapes.

As was described in chapter two, the most formidable legacy of apartheid found in Omaruru today is the town's structure itself. Its social and physical space is still highly divided along racial and ethnic lines with its well-developed 'town' reserved mainly for its white citizens and its less-developed 'location' divided into 'ethnic' sections and comprised almost wholly of its black citizens. In addition to the apartheid policy of partitioning Namibia's towns and cities, the 'Bantustans' project, implemented in the late 60s also systematically separated Namibia and its people into nine ethnic 'homelands' (Peltola 1995:231). This policy enforced a spatial separation that contributed to the development of distinct histories and circumstances for people of differing ethnic groups.

While Independence signified great change in the governmental structure and practices of the country, the template onto which Namibia's continued social development was laid was characterised by severe economic stratification and highly developed patterns of differentiation – racial, ethnic, spatial and otherwise (Pankhurst 1996). It is for this reason that any examination of social relations in Namibia today must take into consideration the extremely divisive nature of colonial policy imposed under South African rule - particularly

in its latter years, consequent of the implementation of apartheid policy. Pendleton notes, 'One of [his] strongest realisations about the functioning of apartheid was that it created a strong feeling in people that they were different, that people in one group differed culturally and socially from people in other groups' (1996:157-8). Not only were Namibia's citizens lumped into carelessly created ethnic categories, they were also systematically pinned against each other in an attempt to prevent them from unifying against their colonial masters (Fuller 1993:95).

Within Omaruru, and Namibia as a whole, the legacies of colonialism's divisive and racist social and economic policies live on. Despite the transition to a new and independent government, Namibians today are confronted with new forms of oppression as the country attempts to sever itself from the former economic and social structures of apartheid. In this struggle it faces a situation where a policy of national reconciliation, aimed at stabilising Namibia's post-independence economy, continues to reinforce prior systems of inequality by protecting the pre-independence gains of the minority (Tapscott 1993:29 Pankhurst 1996). Only in 1998 was legislation first introduced implementing a policy of affirmative action: the benefits of which remain dubious to the majority of residents of Omaruru. While in the meantime, other policies, such as those concerning land reform, have been ongoing with no resolution in sight.

Not only were the categories of race and ethnicity important in determining the social and economic opportunities available to Namibia's citizens throughout colonialism, they were also influential in the creation of people's concepts of themselves and others. Mare notes that colonialism 'was not only a materially exploitative relationship, but also involved ideological domination, shaping the way in which colonised people came to perceive themselves' (1993:21). For this reason, these categories continue to possess tremendous social legitimacy in Namibia today.

During my fieldwork in Omaruru evidence of the continued salience of race and ethnicity as categories of differentiation and identity was ubiquitous. Daily, in friendly conversations, in arguments between employers and employees, in matter-of-fact descriptions of social realities, Omaruru's citizens invoked the categories of ethnicity and race to create and convey meaning in the rhetoric of everyday life. The frequent expression of sentiments that not only invoked the usage of racial and ethnic categories, but also

confounded them with ascribed social statuses or dispositions is indicative of the continued ideological force of these learned categories of difference. Despite the government's attempts to unify all Namibian citizens under a single national identity, and the committed attempts of Namibia's citizens to unify themselves, the practices of differentiation that were extensively developed and refined throughout apartheid, the reality of varied historical experiences, and the persistence of dramatic economic stratification continue to haunt social interaction in Namibia today.

While legislation and policy no longer contain the language of racism, and the ideals expressed by the State now proclaim the equality of all Namibians (with the implicit promise of social mobility) the socio-economic structure created during the apartheid era still remains largely intact. The reality of Omaruru's economic decline since Independence has led to considerable disillusionment among the town's citizens regarding their faith in the current political order and their hopes for economic prosperity. Informants who were long-term residents of Omaruru often spoke of the frustration they felt concerning the unfulfilled expectations they had of the new government. They also noted the irony they perceived in the circumstances brought about by Namibia's liberation: As one informant stated, 'all that freedom has meant to us is that we are now free to starve'.

Amongst Hakahana's residents this frustration abounds. As inhabitants of this squatters' settlement they are often most acutely affected by the growing strain on the town's economy and resources. With adult unemployment rates of 74 per cent, most people living in Hakahana today are engaged in a daily struggle to eke out a living. While most of Hakahana's residents undergo similar experiences of economic hardship, their narratives reveal that the challenges they face as historically informed and positioned individuals differ greatly. These differences, while explored herein through the specific historical trends in ethnic identity formation, are ones which extend far beyond labels or primordial attachments. They are instead, differences that were created and are today constituted by the perpetual intersection of culture, class and race.

While it is not my intention to focus particularly on ethnic categorisations (and indeed it is an objective of this chapter to demonstrate the complexity of identities experienced in Hakahana), due to Namibia's extreme ethnic and racial division under apartheid it is necessary to examine the historical development of these categories of



difference in order to understand their continued inter-penetration with social and class statuses today (Verdery 1994:46).

Gupta and Ferguson suggest that in order to better understand the 'politics of otherness' ( which is not reducible to the politics of representation), it is first necessary to explore the construction of differences in historical process. 'In this perspective, power does not enter the anthropological picture only at the moment of representation, for the cultural distinctiveness that the anthropologist attempts to represent has always already been produced within a field of power relations' (1992:17). Such a historical understanding is necessary in comprehending how and why these categories continue to influence identity appropriation in the present. Examining ethnic identity, not as a monolithic categorisation, but through the processes in which it has been and continues to be formed, additionally elucidates the importance of lived experience, and the symbols and values created thereby – particular those that confound people's means of livelihood, with their cultural conceptions of personal value. Such analysis also permits us to view ethnicity, not as a particular conflict-creating form of identity, but as a phenomenon incorporated within the larger study of difference.

In light of this, it is additionally argued here that, through the interaction of historically differentiated peoples in Hakahana today, there are, in fact, new forms of difference that are emerging. One of the most pronounced influences on people's perspectives that began to be revealed during my fieldwork was their status within Omaruru as recent migrants versus long-term residents. At first, highly confounded with ethnic categorisation, it appeared as if Hakahana's different cultural groups held largely coherent political and social opinions and maintained similar lifestyles in the present. However, upon closer examination, what became apparent was the exceeding importance of a categorisation of differentiation based upon people's statuses within Omaruru as long-term residents or recent migrants.

Through analysis of the narratives of Hakahana residents, the following sections examine these emerging differences, and the motivations for the continued use and importance of cultural categories of identity. They provide an analysis that extends beyond the maintenance of boundaries or the instrumentality of ethnic identity, to one that considers the social salience of these groupings as meaningful, historically-situated identities that help

to justify or challenge people's own perceptions of personal value and legitimacy as citizens within a transitional Namibian society.

### **Herero Identity Formation**

There has been considerable attention paid Herero Namibians in the historical discourse of the country. From early political organisation which placed them in a position of influence upon the arrival of missionaries in the early 1800s, to their devastating struggle against German colonial expansion that culminated in the 1904 war of resistance, the history of Herero cultural and political influence in early Namibia (then German South West Africa) has been well explored. From this obvious and important involvement in early Namibian history, and the development of traditions and ceremonies that commemorate their struggles against German colonialism, Otjiherero-speaking Namibians have cultivated a well-established sense of identity. Within Omaruru, one of the two yearly celebrations takes place each October and inspires widespread participation from all age groups (see Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

As discussed in chapter three, from the onset of South African rule, coinciding with the return migration of many Otjiherero-speaking Namibians driven earlier into Botswana as a consequence of the genocidal attack by German forces, Herero Namibians began to regain rights to land within Namibia and to eagerly pursue pastoralism as a form of self-peasantisation<sup>2</sup>. Through these efforts and the continued maturation of notions of the biological and social boundaries of ethnic identity (ideas that corresponded with those fostered by South African colonialists) Herero Namibians maintained and strengthened their identities as members of an ethnic group, as well as their collective presence as a polity within the country. Additionally, the development of a strong value of autonomy and a cultural practice of bilateral cross-cousin marriage fostered the development of individualism within a socio-economic framework that sustained and promoted the wealth of the extended kinship unit.

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<sup>2</sup> A term Werner (1993) uses to describe the active measure of resistance made by Herero people in their attempts to avoid proletarianisation during the early years of South African rule.



**Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. Herero men, women and children all participate in the Otjiserandu cultural festival held in Omaruru each October.**





Beyond the financial benefits of their prescriptive practice of endogamy, these rules of social organisation had the additional effect of reproducing biologically bounded notions of ethnicity: notions that subsequently constituted a facet of Herero identity. Although the practice of bilateral cross-cousin marriage is no longer adhered to today with much regularity, there remains a frequently communicated social value of endogamy within the cultural group that fosters and is promoted by ideas of ethnic purity, or being 'pure/pure Herero', or being 'sliced'.

Although Otjiherero-speakers comprise only 12 per cent of Hakahana's population, (as opposed to Damara- and Oshiwambo-speakers' rates of 35 and 33 per cent, respectively) they are the third largest population in the settlement and play a significant role in creating social dynamics therein. In many ways their presence reinforces ethnicity's importance as they maintain and communicate conceptions of ethnic difference that emphasise hierarchical structures. These conceptions are additionally bound up in an intricate combination of biological, biblical, cultural and linguistic determinants. Indeed, explanations of Herero people's perceptions of ethnicity call upon many of the arguments devised by South African colonialists to support the notion of the existence of innate differences amongst Namibia's various cultural groups (for a deconstruction of apartheid discourse and Afrikaner ideologies of racism see Norval 1996).

An example of the complex nature of conceptions of ethnic difference exhibited by Herero Namibians during my fieldwork is found in the following quote from an interview with Katerina, a 51 year old Otjiherero-speaking resident of Hakahana. In her words:

First, if I can tell you about the pride one has in his ethnicity group...Even if your mother is someone who is drinking; even if she is someone who is paralysed; even if she is someone who has nothing, you are what she is. And, if I look back to my own side, at the time I was born I was told that I was Herero, and I am agreeing with that because I know that God has divided people on the day he divided the different ethnicity groups. It is why my language is Herero and the pride that I will come out with is not a pride that I am a Herero and Hereros are like this, or like that. No, it is a story of my mother tongue.

Katerina's explanation journeys from ideas that invoke notions of biological inheritance, to religiously founded arguments of inherent ethnic difference - making reference to the biblical story of the fall of Babylon<sup>3</sup> - to one that centralises the importance of linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> The story of Babylon, found in the Old Testament of the Bible in Genesis 11.1-9 is the story of how the people of the world had only one language and upon settling on a plain in Babylonia decided to



categorisations. While not all informants spoke so concisely of various determinants and interwove them to such a degree, most called upon numerous concepts and exhibited complicated understandings of the nature of ethnicity and its importance in the narration of their life histories.

Not observable in Katerina's statement above, most Otjiherero-speaking people interviewed *did* express great pride in their cultural practices and a sense of cultural ownership, and even at times, of cultural superiority. They often commented on the shame involved in wearing the vestments of a Herero person, but originating from another ethnic group (a practice sometimes enacted by Damara women), and took pride in the fact that, while they may speak only Otjiherero, people from other ethnic groups most often learn Otjiherero in order to communicate with them.

In fact, it is not only in communication with Herero people that Otjiherero is spoken. And, although Afrikaans was found to have been spoken by 70 per cent of people I surveyed in Hakahana in 1999, it is not always spoken to a degree of fluency and, more often than not, Otjiherero is used as a medium of communication between people of different language groups. This is a phenomenon observed more often in Hakahana than other areas of Omaruru, (where Afrikaans, and now English is more often spoken) and is largely due to increasing numbers of recent migrants from Namibia's North within the settlement's population. As Otjiherero and Oshiwambo are, to a significant degree, mutually intelligible languages, Oshiwambo migrants, in their attempts to integrate themselves into life in Hakahana, usually attempt to speak Otjiherero. This trend also has the effect of enabling communication between Oshiwambo-speakers and Damara speakers within the settlement as more than half of Damara residents speak Otjiherero as well.

Other components of Herero perceptions of ethnic identity not mentioned in the quote above, but demonstrated seconds later in Katerina's life history interview (and repeated in the context of several interviews with various other informants), are found in the continued practices of pastoralism and cattle ownership. When asked if her involvement in cultural activity had changed over time, Katerina responded, 'I have grown up on the West

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build a city with a tower that reached the sky. They did this in order to make a name for themselves and not be scattered all over the earth. When the Lord came down and saw the city and the tower, He decided that soon they would be able to do anything they wanted and, to prevent this, He went down and mixed up their languages so that they would not be able to understand each other. At this time, He also scattered them throughout the earth.

side [Swakopmund, Walvis Bay area] but I know about the cultural things'. With this she proceeded to sing a song repeatedly crooning the lyrics, 'Oh, the cow I have come with!'. Whether expressly noted or revealed through an action such as this, the role of cattle herding as a source of livelihood is demonstrated as incontestably central to Herero identity.<sup>4</sup>

Today, pastoral activity has been curbed by recurrent drought in Namibia's former reserve areas, occurring over approximately the last thirty years but reaching truly devastating levels of impact more recently in 1993 when Erongo, the region in which Omaruru and the nearby Omatjete reserve area are situated, saw the loss of 53 per cent of small stock and 71 per cent of cattle (Devereux and Naeraa 1996:435). Another cause for the curtailment of pastoral activity is found in post-Independence shifts in Namibia's tourism industry. In the government's efforts to boost tourism, and in Afrikaner and German Namibians' attempts to resituate themselves within the country's developing capitalist economy through establishing game lodges and guest farms,<sup>5</sup> a large amount of acreage has been fenced off or made otherwise inaccessible in recent years. This shift in the economic structure of Namibia's central areas has caused a decrease in the accessibility of land and an increase in urbanisation for those who solely depended on land for pastoral or agricultural use as well as those who formerly combined the practice of pastoralism with waged labour on nearby farms.

Otjiherero-speaking Namibians in Hakahana voiced grievances concerning their current inability to diversify their incomes by having a job and rearing cattle. As Justus, a 38 year old informant stated, 'You know that we are people living out of livestock. But if I get a job at a farm, my employer will never let me be there with even 20 cattle. All he will allow me is that I can stay there with one cow. So, that is a little bit wrong. If we want a job then we are unable to have our own livestock'.

Despite the curtailment of pastoral activity as a result of Namibia's shifting economy, however, the importance of cattle rearing as a Herero means of livelihood cum cultural practice remains evident. During fieldwork, amongst Herero people, strong associations between owning cattle and being Herero were consistently voiced. Many

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<sup>4</sup> Hildi Hendrickson, in 'Our Bodies, Our Flags', her essay, based on an anthropological investigation of perceptions of national and ethnic identity experienced through participation in Herero burial societies, also discusses the centrality of cattle to Herero conceptions of ethnic identity.

<sup>5</sup> as well as the attempts of German nationals to develop a tourism industry largely external to Namibia's economy

Herero friends and informants I encountered during my fieldwork expressed sentiments that conveyed the importance of cattle to their sense of well-being and livelihood: As one informant stated, 'When I see a cow I feel happy because I see life in that cow.'

In Omaruru township there are many Herero Namibians who still possess significant amounts of livestock located elsewhere in Namibia (usually in areas in north-eastern Namibia or in Opuwo in the Northwest). Within the Herero section of Omaruru's 'location', the wealth accumulated from this financial activity over many years is still highly concentrated and observable through the greater number of automobiles and the presence of houses, constructed within the past twenty years, that are privately owned and are double and triple the size of houses found throughout the rest of Ozondje.<sup>6</sup>

Although many Herero Namibians have become wealthier over the years through pastoral activities, it is generally accepted today that rearing cattle is no longer a secure economic practice. For this reason, most people who own cattle or small stock do so in an attempt to diversify their sources of income, and to maintain pastoralism as a cultural practice, or as they express it, 'because it is what Herero people do'.

Of those who live in Hakahana, the same continued cultural importance is expressed, however, most complain of having only few livestock remaining and many have resorted to living in the township because of an inability to sustain themselves on that which is left in the former reserves. Despite the obvious economic hardships facing Herero residents of Hakahana in light of the waning efficacy of their previous means of livelihood and the loss of access to monies controlled by the state that has occurred since Independence, most remain financially advantaged over other members of the settlement.

Upon first surveying throughout Hakahana, Otjiherero-speaking residents appeared to be economically most disadvantaged among the various cultural groups, based on formal employment statistics and limited knowledge of support networks. However, through the process of acquiring life histories, it was revealed that many, while not formally employed, often maintained other sources of income. These sources ranged from private pension funds

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<sup>6</sup> Another indication of the continued socio-economic advantage of Herero Namibians within Omaruru is the relatively low percentage forced to reside in Hakahana. Despite an overall population size within Omaruru that is almost equal to the town's populations of Damara and Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, a significantly greater number of Otjiherero-speaking Namibians live within the permanent houses found in Ozondje, (a situation of residence which is overwhelmingly preferred to living in Hakahana).

accumulated over many years of employment, to continued revenue channelled down from the sale of family cattle located elsewhere in Namibia.

Narratives suggested that the continued relative economic advantage experienced by Otjiherero-speaking residents of Hakahana, combined with their linguistic dominance and well-established ethnic identity within the context of the Namibian nation leave them most often with senses of personal value still well intact, despite the challenges they have faced as a result of the transformation of Omaruru's social and economic landscapes. The compatibility of ethnic and national identities was expressed often by Herero residents as they frequently described themselves as 'Herero Namibians'. As well, their narratives, contrary to those of Damara-speakers in Hakahana, revealed not only this compatibility, but either support or acceptance of the State and its policies; paralleling SWAPO's struggle with what they described as their historical and ongoing struggle within the country as black Namibians opposing white domination. Through their statements they exhibited a respect for the State, an agreement with the policies implemented since Independence (making little note of the ongoing struggle with the government for land redistribution) and explained their current economic hardships as a result of drought and unfair practices of white land owners, rather than a de-prioritisation of their interests within the new Independent government.

In contrast to this, as can be seen in the following analysis of the historical development of Damara identity, Damara Namibians face different realities as a result of their historically influenced social placement in the country today. As will be explored, ethnic identity remains troublesome for many Damara residents of Hakahana. However, due to the development of an ethno-political identity during a time when the Administration propagandised the threat of SWAPO hegemonic rule, ever-present sentiments of the urgency to unite under this identity and to resist the call for national unity put forth by the State continue to fortify ethnicity's importance amongst Damara Namibians and, in turn, influence social relations within Hakahana.



## Damara Identity Formation

*'A human being is someone who has a fundamental place through which he views things historically. A person with no history through which he can be understood is not a person'.*

*Justus Garoeb, Damara King and  
Leader of the United Democratic Front  
Damara Cultural Festival in Okombahe  
November 13, 1999*

Unlike the pre-colonial establishment of Herero identity, Damara identity is considered to have been a colonial invention (Fuller 1993, Gaseb 1999, Rohde 1997). Ivan Gaseb argues that 'historically there was no single Damara nation with a common leadership and unifying political system, but a number of different communities with different leadership structures' (1999:13). Ngavirue additionally utilises Evans-Pritchard's classification of a 'stateless society' to categorise pre-colonial Damara social and political formations – noting the orderly communities in which they lived as non-influential in national politics, but important in their contributions to trade within Namibia (1997:37-8).

Indeed, it is accepted that there was no established Damara ethnic identity before its creation as a result of events that transpired throughout South African rule. The works of Ben Fuller (1993) and Brigitte Lau (1979) reveal the critical role played by the work of Heinrich Vedder in socially unifying those categorised as Damara in opposition to a discourse centred on their historical subjugation to Hereros (Fuller 1993:184). Vedder's misinformed diagnosis of pre-colonial Namibian society placed Damaras at the bottom of an ethnic hierarchy as slaves to Hereros. Despite its fallacy, his assumption took root and formed the basis for policy-making on the macro level as well as personal and group identity formation on the micro and median levels.

These fallacies, while first written more than eighty years ago, are still found in literature published as recently as 1995 and sold in Namibian bookstores today without further addendum (see Malan 1995). Rick Rohde, in his examination of Damara identity in Okombahe, observed the effects of an internalisation of negative stereotypes that he concluded to be a result of their long history of political and economic marginalisation. Similar findings resulted from my fieldwork in Omaruru and suggest a trend in Damara

identity that crosses spatial boundaries and resides on an ideological level. Self-defamatory comments Rohde was privy to such as 'I don't know what is wrong with our people: the Damara are sick' (1997:195) were also notable during my fieldwork.

Additionally, it is not uncommon to hear pejorative sentiments uttered about Damara culture and people by individuals from other ethnic groups. Undoubtedly remnants of colonial rhetoric, these statements usually refer to a perceived lack of culture and centralisation within the Namibian state associated with being Damara-speaking. An example of the continued existence of such sentiments is found in a joke told to me on more than one occasion by different Herero informants that goes as follows: A Herero, an Owambo and a Damara person were given one wish by God. The Herero person wished for cattle and received them. The Owambo person wished for mahango seeds and received them. The Damara person came up to get his wish but said, 'No, me, I'm just with them' and received nothing.

Perhaps influenced by the continued circulation of such jokes and opinions, Damara informants within Hakahana often expressed a reluctant acceptance of their ethnicity as an ascribed category of identity. This was displayed through such quotes as one stated by 45 year old female informant, Amalia, 'I mean, people are calling us Damaras. I don't know what to say except that we are Damara – black Damara people'. On the whole, explanations of what constituted ethnic distinctiveness also tended to be much less complex than those presented by Otjiherero-speaking informants explaining language as the most, and often the only, distinguishable difference.

What is contrary to this minimisation of the importance of ethnicity was information I encountered through questioning about how Omaruru had changed over the years people had lived there. Most informants, when asked this question, quickly noted the influx of Owambo migrants as a great impetus of change and noted cultural and ethnic differences as reasons for what they perceived to be negative shifts in communal life within Omaruru. While usually reluctant to actively emphasise their ethnic distinctiveness, they often passively distanced themselves from these migrant others through highlighting the cultural and lifestyle differences of Oshiwambo-speaking people.

Based on the origins of Damara political identity, this observation is not surprising. The creation of a homogenous Damara political identity has been linked to the manoeuvres

of the South African colonial state seeking to market an alternative to an independent, unitary Namibian state in the latter years of apartheid rule. With the establishment of Damaraland as a 'bantustan' in 1968 and the subsequent establishment of a second-tier representative authority in 1980, '[t]ribalism was made part and parcel of the ruling methods of apartheid. All government projects...were channelled through this administration...[and n]aturally it was used to strengthen tribal structures' (Peltola 1995:231).

The creation of ethnic identity was prioritised by the Damara Council (the second-tier authority created to administrate with Damaraland) through a political ideology stating that Damaras must first have a Damara identity before they could fully join a model of the Namibian nation which was projected by the Administration as a consortium of rival 'tribes' (Peltola 1995:239).



**Figures 5.4. Damara Cultural Festival participants. Dancers wear the colours of the United Democratic Front (UDF) political party.**



**Figure 5.5. At the Damara Cultural Festival sketches are performed that reenact Damara historical cultural practices.**



Despite the centralisation of Namibia's government upon Independence, and SWAPO's articulation of a nationalist plea for unity in diversity, Garoeb's quote from the Damara Cultural Festival (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5 above), found at the start of this section, is evidence of the continued presence of ethno-political rhetoric on the median level (see Appendix B for a transcription of his speech in its entirety). On the micro level, the continued fear of cultural and political hegemony and the need to unite as Damara people in order to protect political and social interests is also frequently voiced.

These sentiments, which are used to politically prioritise ethnic identity over national identity, are obvious derivatives of pre-Independence political rhetoric that urged the resistance of SWAPO rule as both the Administration and Damara ethno-politicians painted SWAPO as a fundamentally tribal organisation: The implication was that a SWAPO victory would not be a nationalist victory, but an 'Ovambo' one. Richard Rohde also noted the continued presence of these sentiments in Damara discourse today. As he states, 'there is a general distrust of the Ovambo as a political force associated with the ruling SWAPO party. They are feared as the new colonialists, an alien culture creating new power structures which by-pass Damara interests...' (1997:195).

Despite the Administration's anti-SWAPO propaganda and its attempt to ethnicise political life, in the mid-1980's there emerged a strong movement toward Namibian nationalism. Among Damara citizens, the creation of an ethnically based political party in support of Namibian nationalism, the United Democratic Front (UDF), helped to maintain and develop simultaneously both ethnic and national political identities. And, borne out of a shared desire for liberation from colonial rule and the perceived threat of a neo-colonialism in the form of Ovambo political hegemony, discourse and activity surrounding Namibia's Independence movement further strengthened Damara ethnic identity in opposition to Ovambo rule.

Today, amongst Hakahana's older generations (Damara and otherwise), the meaningfulness of Namibia's liberation has come into question in more recent years, whereas younger generations continue to place a high value on the ideals of freedom and equality. For Damara informants old *and* young, however, expressed fears of Ovambo hegemony are ubiquitous in their micro-level narratives, and are still a formidable impetus for creating and strengthening Damara identity.



Narratives reveal that, amongst Damara residents, these concerns are heightened by micro-level interactions with Owambo residents of Hakahana who are noted to refer to Damara people in a derogatory manner, as *kwangara*. *Kwangara*, a term used by Oshiwambo-speakers to refer to Bushmen (Barnard 1997), is interpreted by Damara informants to mean ‘nothing’, or ‘a person without value’. Stories of the use of the term, regardless of the intended meaning, reflect a frequently expressed fear that Damara people are considered to be devalued or forgotten in the context of the State and in the context of the micro-level social setting as well. An example of a story in which the social meaning of *kwangara* is more wholly explained is found in a narrative of Amalia, a 45 year old Damara woman who was born in Omaruru and lives in Hakahana today. Her tale is of an encounter she witnessed between an Owambo Municipality worker and a Damara resident of Hakahana. In her words:

I went yesterday to the place where we are putting the garbage to look for some wires to make up a fence and there was this Damara woman who was also looking through there to collect things for her home and this Owambo man who is driving the garbage tractor, he has slapped this Damara woman and told her that he has never married a Damara woman because she is a *kwangara*. Instead he has married a woman from his same ethnicity group – an Owambo woman. He was angry because he wanted to burn the garbage and there was no time to wait on her to find her wires. I saw him slap the other woman and I picked up my stuff and went instead of staying and being slapped myself. While things are going on like that, how should we understand each other? How should we think when they are calling us people who are ‘nothing’?

Through their stories of micro-level discrimination and macro-level disregard, Damara citizens express a troubled relationship with both ethnic and national identities. Caught amongst the desire to transcend the largely negative contemporary stereotyping; the historical discourse surrounding the colonial invention of Damara identity; and the urgency, posited by ethno-politicians to unite as Damara citizens in order to protect their own livelihood in an Independent Namibia, informants in Hakahana express dichotomous, often shifting sentiments regarding the importance of ethnicity.

The fear of such political and social disregard is also articulated in median level political rhetoric. The following fable, presented by an ethno-politician, Mr. Habeb, at the Damara Cultural Festival in November of 1999, demonstrates the continuation of fears of

SWAPO political and cultural hegemony through the culturally familiar context of a 'jackal story'<sup>7</sup>. It is translated here as follows:

This story is about a lion, a gemsbok<sup>8</sup> and a jackal. The jackal was walking one day and he found an old lion. And this old lion was lying down and didn't know how to catch his own food. So he said to the jackal, 'Jackal, would you please come over here? I have a problem.' And the jackal got closer to him.

As the jackal was getting closer to him, the lion spoke. He said, 'I'm too old to hunt. Will you go down and find me a nice gemsbok?' So the jackal agreed and he went down and found a nice gemsbok at one of the watering holes where he was drinking water. He asked the gemsbok, 'Hey, what are you doing here? Our king is too old and he is sick and ready to die. He said I must find you and tell you that you are going to be the ruler after his death. He wants you closer so that he can bless you and prepare you to take over.' So the gemsbok agreed to go with him and they went down to where the lion was.

As they were getting closer to the lion, the jackal disappeared. Now, the gemsbok had come closer to listen to what the lion had to say and the lion jumped on him and he nearly bit off his neck, but only got a part of the gemsbok's ear. So the gemsbok ran away back to where he was before at the watering hole.

The jackal was sent back by the old lion to get the same gemsbok again. So when he got there the jackal said to the gemsbok, 'Hey, what kind of a stupid animal are you?' The lion was just trying to whisper something in your ear. Why did you jump away? The lion is old. He just wanted to tell you what his business is. So let's go down and you will see what he wants to tell you.'

So they started down towards the place where the lion was and the gemsbok started to cool down and feel relaxed, not worried anymore. He went down with the jackal and on the way there he said, 'Man, that lion took a piece of my ear'. And the jackal said, 'Ach, man, you were stupid. He just wanted to whisper something in your ear because he didn't want to bless you out loud.'

So they went there and the lion said, 'Come a bit closer'. The gemsbok got closer and the lion jumped on him without him realising, killed him and began to eat his flesh.

So while the gemsbok was being eaten by the lion, the jackal started to steal some pieces of the brain and eat them. After the lion finished eating all the meat of the gemsbok he started looking for the brain. But the jackal said to him, 'Don't even waste your time looking after the gemsbok brain. That animal was so stupid he just handed himself over to you. He might not even have had a brain he is so stupid.'

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<sup>7</sup> 'Jackal stories' are fables popular in Damara culture that involve a jackal as the central character. Through his cleverness, a culturally desirable attribute amongst Damara people, the jackal always outwits his opponents in a mischievous and cunning manner.

<sup>8</sup> A large antelope, *Oryx gazella*, found in Southwest and East Africa. Also a symbol of the Damara nation and likened to Damara people through its proud (yet perhaps, vulnerable) nature.

When presented to Damara informants in Hakahana, the political nature of this tale was consistently noted. The gemsbok, a given symbol of the Damara nation, represented the proud and naïve Damara citizen who trusts in the government to provide for his interests. The jackal represented a politician from any ethnicity group working to help the government and forsaking Damara people. The lion, it was explained to me, was ‘the old man who has taken over the nation’ (i.e. President Sam Nujoma)<sup>9</sup>. For those present on the day of the festival, these explanations were made apparent by the speaker himself as he continued by stating,

That is the story of the lion, the gemsbok and the jackal. But why I tell you this story, my dear fellow brothers, is that that’s the way the Damara people are being trapped. That’s the way they are being trapped by people of other ethnicity groups. Now, through my message I wanted to tell you people that you are my people. Be proud to be a Damara. Don’t give away your ethnicity group. Don’t try to forget that you are Damara. The other people will just point fingers at you and say, ‘You are a stupid nation. You are a useless nation. You are a nation without your way’. Because there are days when I can see that my own people are trying to talk other languages. If someone asks him, ‘Are you Damara?’ He doesn’t even want to admit that he is Damara. That’s how we give the other people the opportunity to destroy us. We are Damara people. So accept this message and teach the kids every little thing about the Damara ethnicity group.

An additional factor contributing to the negative feelings held towards the State which results in a communicated sense of urgency to unite, is the precarious position Damara citizens view themselves as holding in light of increasing migration from other areas within Namibia and the growing rates of unemployment experienced throughout Namibia’s Central Parts. The historical trend of urbanisation experienced most consistently by Damara citizens, and the historical importance of employment as a means of sustaining livelihoods, leave Damara citizens feeling highly at risk in light of the recent shifts in Omaruru’s population and the township’s economic decline. As addressed in chapter three, from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the depletion of herds due to the rinderpest pandemic and land dispossession which resulted from German colonial expansion, Damara Namibians were forced into wage labour within the country’s growing urban centres and on White owned farms. With an estimated ninety percent of adult males in the Police Zone engaged in wage labour in 1913 (Werner 1993:140) and the expansion of white South African settlement after

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<sup>9</sup> President Nujoma’s status as an Owambo leader of the country feeds into current fears of Owambo ethnic and political hegemony established during apartheid rule.

1919 that claimed even greater amounts of arable land within Namibia's central parts (Wallace 1994:1), indigenous populations within this area were given arguably little other option for the pursuit of livelihood.

As has been noted, upon the onset of South African rule, Herero Namibians were given better land by the Administration and, through committed efforts, further developed identity and economic stability through cattle rearing. Oshiwambo-speakers, as we will discuss in the following section, strengthened cultural identity through the practice of growing *mahango*<sup>10</sup>, and ethno-political identity through their participation in migrant labour. And, following the pattern of identity development through means of livelihood, Damara-speakers, with significantly higher rates of urban residence and less access to arable land throughout colonialism, became highly reliant upon urban employment opportunities in the maintenance of positive cultural identities.

As noted in Chapter 3, Fuller's work, outlining the refinement of extended kinship networks in aid of acquiring job opportunities, explains the centralisation of urban employment in Damara cultural (and class) identity formation (1993:239). During my fieldwork, Damara informants in Hakahana, men and women alike, exhibited great concern about failing networks they had previously maintained between Omaruru and usually one or two other central Namibian towns. This result was thought to be due to disruption of Namibia's economy by Independence.

Damara informants also consistently expressed a direct correlation between the ability to obtain a job and the ability to maintain a sense of personal value. An example of this is found in 38 year-old Louisa's answer in response to the question of how she would describe herself. As she stated, 'I can describe myself through saying that the time I was going to school and the time I was going to work, I was an independent woman, but now that I am not working, I am just like a woman who has got nothing.' Another example is found in a quote by Daniel, a 63 year-old man in Hakahana. In his words, 'I am describing myself as a grandfather, but I am even ashamed to say I am a grandfather because I have no job and if my granddaughter comes to me, visiting grandfather, she comes with hunger and her grandfather is also hungry. So we will just sit down and look at each other with empty stomachs'.

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<sup>10</sup> Millet – the staple crop grown in large family plots in former Owamboland.



Because of these culturally influenced attitudes and the precarious economic positioning of Damara Namibians at Independence as employees of white owned farms, businesses, households and factories, many have been left with not only waning employment opportunities, but also with disrupted definitions of their own identity and personal value within a new Namibian nation. Their heavy reliance upon industries that have suffered with the exodus of whites and the discontinuation of South African financial support, coupled with the increased competition for jobs they have experienced as Namibia's economy has been restructured to incorporate large numbers of migrants and returnees from Namibia's North, both lend a sense of urgency to their situation and result in the continued politicisation of ethnic identity in a class-based struggle within Hakahana.

One population within Hakahana that would be overlooked in an analysis of identities confined to ethnic group association would be that of a substantial number of young Namibians born to Damara mothers and to fathers of other language groups. While other maternal/paternal combinations exist, within Hakahana, the most substantial number of citizens who are born to parents of different ethnic groups are those whose mothers are Damara. In an investigation of identity appropriation, these individuals provide an interesting glimpse at the negotiation of identity that occurs when indeed negotiation of ethnic identity is possible. An exploration of such phenomena affords us insight into the avenues of National identity appropriation that are created through the blending and dissolution of difference.

Although most people continue to locate themselves still firmly within a given ethnic identity, there is a growing number of youths whose ethnic ancestry is becoming more complex, and who, in turn, respond to this diversity by reverting primarily to the categorisation of national identity, rather than ethnic identity. For an example of the complexity of identities that is arising, and insight into the phenomenon described above, let us turn to an example of Lucas, a 17 year old boy who was born in Omaruru and now resides in Hakahana. As he describes:

When I was young, I was speaking Otjiherero, and then I started to learn Damara at the school. My mother is Damara, but she grew up speaking Otjiherero, so that's what we spoke at home. Myself, I don't know how to see myself, but my grandmother was a Damara and I consider myself to be Damara. Herero is just a language we are speaking. I mean, mostly the people I am staying around with are not coming pure/pure from one ethnicity group. They are mixed up like I am. So, as we are gathering ourselves, we are just speaking

all of us Otjiherero...I see myself like someone who doesn't have an ethnicity group. I mean, that if I look the story from my grandmother to my mother, all of them are sliced. And myself, I am sliced. My grandmother was proud to be a Damara and taught me that I was also Damara, but myself, I will just say that I am a Namibian because I was born in this country. That's all.

Lucas, and many other young Namibians with similar stories of mixed ancestry, demonstrated a pattern of adopting national identity as a less complicated categorisation. Another trend is one that demonstrates a willingness of Hakahana's youth born to Damara mothers and fathers of other ethnic origins, to appropriate the ethnic identity of their fathers despite having been raised solely by their mothers in Damara culture. Both this trend and that of appropriating national identity over Damara identity are indicative of the troubled relationship Damara Namibians exhibit with ethnicity and their ongoing struggle to overcome a history of marginalisation within the country.

In contrast to Damara Namibians', and as we have explored, Herero Namibians' prioritisation of ethnic identity, which continues today for various reasons, Owambo Namibians in Hakahana delegate much less importance to this category of differentiation. The following section examines identity formation by Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians as it has occurred historically and as it was observed in Hakahana during my fieldwork. This analysis will provide the final factor that will inform a discussion to follow about the importance of Hakahana's residents' diverse historical experiences in influencing social relations within the settlement today.

### **Owambo Identity Formation**

This section explores the historical factors involved in the creation and continued appropriation of ethnic and national identities by Owambo Namibians; highlighting the major discrepancy which became apparent over the course of fieldwork regarding the experiences of individuals based on their status as 'long-term residents of Omaruru' or 'recent migrants'.<sup>11</sup> Exploring, once again, the importance of lived experience in determining people's attitudes towards ethnic and national identities, the case of Owambo

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<sup>11</sup> These categorisations have been made based on the timing of people's migrations either on or directly around Independence or in the years prior to Independence.

Namibians in Hakahana highlights the cultural and ideological discrepancies that have arisen over time due to varied historical realities based on place of residence prior to Independence.

As was the case for Damara Namibians, 'in former times there never was an identity of a tribe calling themselves Owambo: there were Kwanyamas, Ndongas, Ongandjeras, etc.' (Peltola 1995:230). In fact, for most recent migrants from former Owamboland living in Hakahana today, their categorisation as 'Owambo' remains highly contested. During my fieldwork this categorisation was most often expressed to be a functional identity, an etic category appropriated only for its usefulness in a multi-ethnic setting. However, it was found, through the collection of life histories, that Owambo Namibians who were long-term residents of Omaruru had often internalised this identity over time and found greater legitimacy in the larger cultural boundary that its use signifies.

Historically, former Owamboland was inhabited by eight major 'tribes' or kingships, that shared three mutually comprehensible dialects: Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, and Oshimbandja (Ngavirue 1997:38). Ngavirue has posited that these linguistic divisions occurred as a result of the maintenance of each kingship's, political and spatial independence from the others, with portions of sanctified no-man's ground surrounding each governed region (1997:39). These various kingships, while maintaining autocratic systems of rule by individual chiefs, and having no central authority to unite them, did however trade and interact with one another to a great degree and, in turn, continued to develop and maintain shared cultural practices over time. Additionally, Shigwedha (1999), in his reconstruction of Uukwaluudhi<sup>12</sup> history, highlights the fluidity of early linguistic and kingship identities. He writes of people's tendencies to shift allegiances to different chiefs and to migrate in order to break away from existing clan power structures or to join others as a result of ecological or financial concerns (1999:42). Shigwedha argues, further highlighting the early fluidity of these associations, that the processes of kingdom or clan formation varied, suggesting they were not only formed due to the splintering of a larger populations, but also through the consolidation of various disenfranchised members of already existing clans. Only in the early 1900s, with the onset of a more peaceful time in former Owamboland, were these kingship identities stabilised and the creation of kingdoms undertaken on the basis of more homogenous cultural or linguistic attributes (1999:45).

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<sup>12</sup> One of the nine kingship groups or clans located in western 'Owamboland'.

Much as is suggested of early use of kingship identity, Owambo ethnic identity has been noted to have been used in a very fluid manner. This fluidity of identity is noted in ethnographic literature of the 1970's highlighting the plight of Owambo Namibians in search of employment within the discriminatory South African labour system. Robert Gordon, in a covert study conducted at a Namibian mine compound, tells of how, 'faced with the necessity of finding work and being acutely aware of [the mine's] practice [of hiring Kavango-speakers rather than Owambo-speakers after Owambo-speakers were pegged as being trouble makers after the organisation of a resistance strike] and the various formal impediments, many Owambo were forced to move to the Kavango and, by switching their ethnic identity, to seek work as Kavango' (Gordon 1977:42). Gillian and Suzanne Cronje also comment on this phenomenon of switching ethnic identities as they describe how, 'Some Ovambos have settled on farms as permanent labourers by getting themselves the pass of a local African, thus disguising themselves as "Damara" or "Herero"' (Cronje 1979:65).

Research conducted through interviews with Hakahana's residents indicates that kingship identity, not ethnic identity, is today most central to Oshiwambo-speaking recent migrants' conceptions of self. And it is through these identities that lifestyle and cultural attributes are expressed and categorised. Interviewees from all different kingship groups, including those beyond the three Ngavirue notes as linguistically dominant, express pride in the linguistic distinctiveness of their specific dialects, regardless of the formal documentation of the language. A corollary to this is that recent migrants frequently deny the existence of an Oshiwambo language or an Owambo culture. Rather, for them, 'Owambo' is a categorisation that only has meaning in the context of Namibia's central and more ethnically diverse locations.

Despite the predominance of kingship groups in the constructions of identity expressed by recent migrants, informants consistently acknowledged similarities in the cultural practices and lifestyles of individuals categorised as 'Owambo'. Similarities most often cited were the growing of *mahango*, the making and drinking of *tombo*,<sup>13</sup> the prayers which surround and bless the production of these goods, and the making of baskets, hats, skirts and other goods. Although all were important cultural markers for recent migrants that linked Owambo people in ways of cultural practice, note was constantly made of the

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<sup>13</sup> Alcoholic beverage brewed from fermented millet (*mahango*).





**Figure 5.6. Partners Julia and Lazarus sit amidst the growing *mahango* in their plot in Hakahana.**

variations that existed in these practices as they were performed by people of different kingships.

Contrary to information given by recent migrants, long-term residents of Omaruru now residing in Hakahana expressed a diminished importance associated with kingship identities: noting this as a phenomenon that occurs over time spent in Namibia's central parts as encounters with other forms of difference promote re-categorisations and reprioritisations of identity. As Hambeleni, a 35 year old female informant who migrated to Omaruru in 1986 explains,

Look, we in Owamboland, we don't describe ourselves as Owambo. We describe ourselves as black people who are coming out of these different tribes like Kwanyama, Ndonga, Nkolonkazi, and so on. Here we can say that we are Owambo because you know that there are different kinds of ethnicity groups here in Omaruru. You find a white person, you find a Damara person, you find a Herero. So I won't come out and say I am a Kwanyama here. I will say I am Owambo so that the others will know better. But really, Owambo is what you are only once you find yourself south of the Red Line.<sup>14</sup>

Hambeleni's statement, while remaining true today due to the great ethnic homogeneity still found in former Owamboland, has its origins in earlier times when

<sup>14</sup> The 'Red Line' is a marker established during German colonialism to separate Namibia's northern regions from its central and southern regions. It was drawn and check points were erected to ensure the containment of cattle and other livestock produced in the North, prohibiting its transport to the central and southern regions of Namibia. It remains where it was originally located and the check points still stand today.

Owambo identity was created through encounters with white colonialists during participation in migrant labour. Over time, as experience within the contract labour system became progressively more standard in the lives of young Owambo men and people's periods of participation were extended, the shared experiences of labourers and the continued ascription of Owambo as an ethnic category gave way to the term's legitimacy. In the creation of the Owambo People's Organisation (OPO) the categorisation was politically functional in establishing unity between fellow migrant labourers originating from Namibia's North. However, with the transformation of the OPO into SWAPO and the adoption of the goal of national liberation, the premise on which unity was sought readily shifted from one of ethnic brotherhood to black nationalism with its defining 'other' – the white colonial oppressor. As Peltola suggests, 'the natural political expression of resistance to oppression experienced in these circumstances [wa]s anti-colonialism and Black Nationalism' (1995:90).

Despite the continued attempts by the Administration to direct goods and services through tribal authorities, nationalist ideology in Owamboland continued to gain ground and triumphed over ethnic politics. Throughout the years of armed conflict that followed SWAPO's establishment, its members and its supporters became evermore unwaveringly committed to Namibian nationalism while the importance and validity of ethnic categorisations were often challenged. It was on this premise that SWAPO gained popularity, not only in Owamboland but also throughout Namibia, and, in March of 1990, finally succeeded in securing Namibia's Independence from South African rule.

The continued rejection of identities constructed and imposed throughout colonialism, along with a sustained belief in self-determining nationalist sentiments was apparent in the narratives of recent migrants in Hakahana. This pattern was reflected in people's denial to acknowledge any concrete meaning associated with the term 'Owambo'. Statements such as, 'We are all Owambo. You are Owambo. I am Owambo. He is Owambo. All of us.' (made to me and my Damara field assistant) additionally placed the term outside of any obvious ethnic or cultural division and equated it with a more universal form of identity – with boundaries that, it seemed, were purposefully ambiguous.

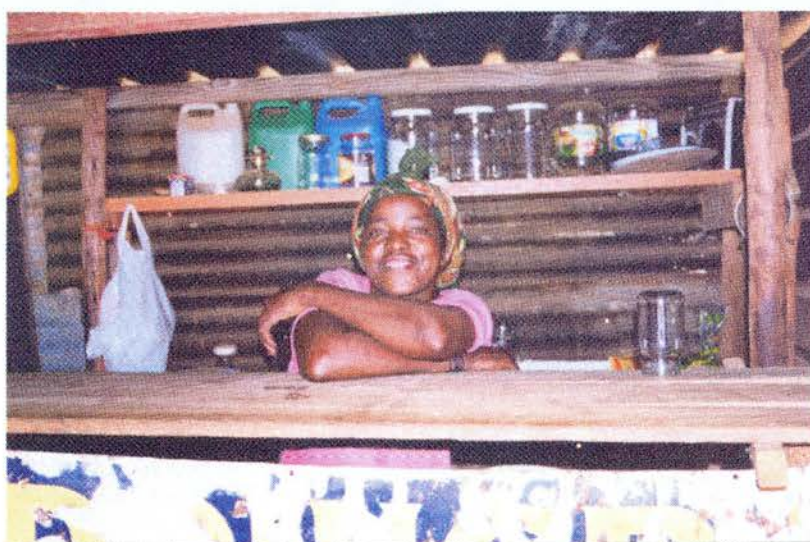
In all, the politicisation of the ethnic term, and indeed, the social unacceptability of rhetoric concerning ethnic identity in general, appeared to be greatly influential in determining the parameters of speech surrounding narratives of recent migrants. These



constraints were also present in their daily discussions. And, having in place kingship categories through which to express cultural distinctiveness and pride, these less political terms were usually opted for in lieu of ethnic categorisations.

The importance of culture and cultural categorisations is also viewed through the innovation and entrepreneurial spirit displayed by most recent migrants (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8). Of the 53 small businesses, or *cuca* shops, in Hakahana 42 are Owambo owned and operated. Through the collection of life histories it was revealed that particularly within Kwanyama culture there is a strong desire to engage in this economic activity. Gabriel, a 23 year old Kwanyama informant who migrated to Windhoek in 1997 and then on to Omaruru in 1999, has stated,

You know that Kwanyama people, they were left behind: Many of them were not educated. But, you know that if you have a shop and someone is asking, 'Whose shop is that?' and you tell them, 'It's Gabriel's shop', then the people are scared and stay far away because you've got a shop. As a Kwanyama person, I will be a great businessman. It is kind of a blood instinct. As Kwanyama people in past times, if you wanted to survive, you had to have your little shop. That is how we survive even today.



**Figure 5.7. Proud Kwanyama *Cuca Shop* owner, Hambeleni.**

Belief in a Kwanyama aptitude for business is thought to have originated in pre-colonial times as they were reputed within former Owamboland to be '*traders par*

*excellence*'; conducting business with Herero pastoralists from areas further south (Nitsche 1913 cited in Ngavirue 1997:39).

Kwanyama businesses as well as businesses throughout the whole of Owamboland were developed to a much greater degree from the late 1950's onwards as the Administration began to grant trading licenses within Namibia's North through the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC). Between 1950 and 1966 licensed businesses increased from 0 in number to 311 in former Owamboland. By 1971 there were over 1,500 licensed traders in addition to 3,000 unlicensed (Gordon 1978:283). Through these activities a cultural value on the development of entrepreneurial skills was further established.

Today, this value aids Owambo migrants (the majority of whom are Kwanyama) in Hakahana as it encourages their participation in Namibia's new and ever-shifting economy which offers fewer and fewer opportunities beyond the development of small and medium enterprise. As was brought to light in Chapter 4, the overabundance of small businesses in Hakahana results in their lack of viability as sole sources of income, but for many, these businesses do enable participation in an informal system of trade that helps to combat economic isolation.

Despite the abundant number of those who make a living through this means of livelihood and other forms of employment, many do face serious financial hardship which results in their inability to sustain themselves economically in the central parts. For those who don't have the means to establish businesses, or are unable to find other opportunities



**Figure 5.8. Cuca Shops and Tombo Houses are also sites of other kinds of trade and entrepreneurial efforts.**



for economic security in the central parts, former Owamboland becomes a subject in their narratives which is seen in contrast to Omaruru and Hakahana. While central townships are viewed as places where making a living is difficult and individualism as a result of poverty hinders communal sharing, Owamboland is seen as a place where food is grown and readily shared and survival is more easily secured. The continued connection most recent migrants have to Northern Namibia; the assumed possibility of being able to return and live an easier life in this region; and an awareness of the prodigious amount of development aid that has been channelled into the region since Independence, all seem to satisfy recent Owambo migrants, regardless of their financial successes or troubles, that the government is looking out for their welfare. These contenting beliefs allow recent migrants a certain pride and ownership of the country and a sense of access to the state as Namibian citizens.

Another factor that appeared to influence patterns of national identity appropriation for recent migrants was the continued acceptance of nationalist rhetoric disseminating from the macro level; with 85 per cent remaining in support of SWAPO. Additionally, as was discussed in chapter four, their position as newcomers would make focussing on ethnic difference a hindrance to social and economic absorption within the township. But, beyond any other influence, the greatest determinant of conceptions of identity found in the narratives of recent 'Owambo' migrants was the facility with which they could appropriate Namibian national identity. As citizens from Namibia's North, most have directly experienced and often engaged in the prolonged struggle to liberate the country from colonial rule. Additional, most often as members of the ruling political party, and as migrants who embody the ideals of Namibian liberation itself through exercising their freedom of mobility, these individuals express great pride in their national identity and an unequalled ownership of recent Namibian history. An example of this is found in the following quote from Lazarus, a 61 year-old man living in Hakahana who migrated after the war. As he states:

One thing that I can be proud of is that first I was angry until I went to war and picked up a gun. And after that, the country has become independent. And now I am an old man and I'm feeling happy that my kids and my grandkids are attending school and can have a better future in our new Namibia.

Through Lazarus' words it is possible to comprehend the ready appropriation of national identity by those who were so directly involved with Namibia's liberation struggle. However, for long term residents of Namibia's central parts, narratives conveying

attachments to ethnic and national identities differ greatly from those of recent migrants. In addition to their more ready acceptance of ethnic categorisation over kingship identity as discussed above, they also express lesser degrees of nationalist pride in conjunction with a growing disenchantment regarding the policies of the State. This can be observed through the words of Swama, a 21 year-old Owambo woman who was born in Tsumeb in 1978 and moved to Omaruru 12 years prior to my fieldwork in 1999. In her words:

Yes, I am a Namibian. But looking to the government, the government hasn't done something great for me. Even here in Omaruru we have tried many things that the government should have helped us with, but there is nothing that has happened. They have promised us many things but we have received little, which means I won't say the government has done this for us and that for us, and I have to be proud of it. I will say something good about the government when they start helping families and start helping people who are on the streets. Then I can be proud of them that they are doing something great. Right now, they are helping people who eat every day and are having a better life, but they are not helping the others who don't have anything. Even now we have tried to ask them to give us jobs, just to have a little bit of living without struggling, but if there is nothing to show, then I can't be proud of them.

Swama's comments are starkly different from those of recent migrants regarding attitudes towards the State. Her comments, and those of many other long-term residents of Omaruru, reflect their frustration today as Omaruru's citizens experience a significant decline in employment opportunities and an increase in crime and economic hardship within the town.

Also in contrast to the experiences of recent migrants, Owambo long term residents often communicate a sense of loss associated with the post-Independence transformation of Omaruru as a township. In the following quote, Ndahambelela, a 52 year-old Owambo woman who has resided in Omaruru for 22 years, describes her understanding of Omaruru's past and her views of Omaruru today:

In the old location times we were living well here in Omaruru. If I had a problem in my house, maybe I didn't have food, then I could go down to the cuca shops and the owner would know me, who I am, where I stay, and I could have packed my groceries in my bag because he knew when I would give him...Today, since the country has been made free, the people who are making business, we don't know them and they don't know us and life is much harder. And the ethnicities in Omaruru, they used to get along, but now they do not. Because now, if you've got something like food and you leave it here at your place and go looking for someone or maybe to the shops, then, when you come back, it will be gone. It's the different ethnicity groups,

mostly Owambo, and some Damara people who have come here and found us in our township. They are the ones that have come in here and are stealing and causing problems. You know what? The world has turned upside down. Not just Namibia, but the whole world. It has turned to another way. It's not how it was. The time I was in Omaruru before, I would wash myself and go visit someone and come back, and everything would be just as I left it. But now, you know what? The human being has turned into a baboon.

Ndahambelela's statement is only one from many informants that indicated a great shift in the nature of relations within Omaruru and the social parameters which govern life in the township. Due to the expansion of the town since Independence and the restructuring of its economic and demographic composition, many who have resided there for longer periods of time note the decreasing security, both economically and socially, and the loss of a sense of community that has occurred since Independence. These sentiments are more similar to testimonies of long-term residents of Damara and Herero ethnicity than to those of fellow Oshiwambo-speakers who are recent migrants. This suggests the emergence of a trend wherein greater importance is now applied to the varied historical experience of the town's citizenry over other forms of difference. This historical experience is important to the analysis presented here as it determines people's abilities to imagine their lives and their place within the Namibian nation, and in turn, their ability to appropriate different forms of identity. Ndahambelela's statement that the world has turned upside down reflects widespread concerns within Hakahana that are occurring as a result of the transformation of social and economic life in the township. For those who are long-term residents of Omaruru, the old symbols and meanings that they invoked to make sense of the world around them no longer apply. A division is created between the understandings of long-term residents and those of migrants as a result. For recent migrants, no similar sense of loss is expressed, rather, in their experience the symbols and meanings used to create community and to order the world around them are constantly being created and legitimated in an active process of defining their position in a new Namibia.

Applying the work of Appadurai (1996) to an analysis of social life in the settlement, historical experiences and the imagined worlds they create and enable are crucial in the creation of dynamics within Hakahana. Historically situated imaginings of community and life comprised from micro-level experiences inform recent migrants and long-term Owambo residents of Omaruru, and hence, result in varied perceptions of the present. Class and culture remain intertwined and greatly important in the interaction of individuals, and

experiences of identity formation that have varied over time continue to situate people economically and socially within Omaruru. However, one of the greatest discrepancies between people's imaginings of community and life in present-day Hakahana is based on the length of their residence in Omaruru and, consequently, their historical experiences prior to Independence. Identities formed and sustained throughout Namibia's history continue to influence people's thoughts, behaviours and perceptions as they interact and today. But in this interaction, what was fundamentally revealed was that learned patterns of differentiation and the contemporary realities of a society undergoing significant transformation converge to make the varied lived experiences of Hakahana's residents the most formidable obstacle to community formation experienced today.

What makes matters more complicated is that most of Hakahana's residents appear to be largely unaware of these new patterns of differentiation that are emerging. Owambo long-term residents of Omaruru, due to the immediacy of historical difference in their interaction with recent migrants, often express a more primary awareness of this form of difference as a 'referent' (Guillamaumin 1995:250) from which they order their relationships. However, for most other residents of Hakahana, ethnic identity remains the primary referent in their categorisations of difference. Despite the negotiation of national and ethnic identities, learned practices and ideologies of racial and ethnic difference are reverted to in people's attempts to order life around them. It is only secondarily that most long-term residents revert to explanations of historical difference as a determinant in interaction within Omaruru. They do so through the acknowledgement, much like Ndahambelesa's, that ethnic relations in Omaruru were previously good, but that the recent influx of migrants has changed the dynamics of the town and the people's ability to get along with one another. Consequent of the lingering influence of Namibia's ethnically divided past, people's attachments to different identities and their abilities to form community are affected as the social transformations that Independence has brought about create a class cum ethnic struggle within Omaruru - one that is enacted most dramatically in Hakahana today.



## Conclusion

Terray defines classes as 'large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation...to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it' (1975:86). Whereas Eriksen defines ethnic groups as 'Products of long-term processes of social differentiation where relevances of cultural difference are invoked or created under shifting social circumstances, and where the result is a form of discourse justifying a particular social order' (1992:21). Through the juxtaposition of these definitions we see that the predominant factor governing both descriptions is the historical processes through which they have come about. This chapter has argued that, through an analysis of these formative processes and their continued interpenetration today, it is possible to understand ethnic interaction within Hakahana, observed during my fieldwork, as a result of an struggle to maintain both livelihood and a sense of personal value within both local and national communities undergoing significant transformation. Beyond this argument, this chapter has also demonstrated the emergence of new forms of difference in post-Independence Namibia that have yet to be identified by many, but are essentially based on Namibians' divided pasts, not only as members of historically created ethnic cum class groupings, but also on their historical experiences as *spatially* positioned individuals.

The following chapter explores how the varied historical experiences of Hakahana's residents form the imaginings of the present. Working from the understanding of identity formation and the political and/or social nature of ethnicity associated with different ethnic groups provided within this chapter, chapter 6 proceeds to analyse the simultaneous social and political nature of memory narratives found in Hakahana. Through its examination of the forces of memory in recreating the past and influencing the present, it explores the importance of memory in shaping the understandings and imaginings through which people appropriate identities. It also examines the crucial role of memory within Hakahana as a factor in the resistance of hegemony. Additionally, it explores the emergence of Independence as a temporal focal point from which understandings of the present,

dichotomously positioned in relation to the past, influence people's attitudes towards the State and their ability to create a sense of community on both local and national levels.

## Chapter Six

### **Making Memories and Making Sense: Narrating Pasts and Ordering the Present in Post-Independence Society**

The macro-level discourse and policy since Independence that reflects the government's motto of 'unity in diversity', continues to be challenged at the micro and median levels of Namibian society. People's historically-learned patterns of separatism, the continuing usefulness of political ethnicity, and the greatly divergent historical experiences of identity formation have been difficult to overcome. Additionally, the spatial separation that occurred throughout South African colonialism and the war's presence in the North of the country has led to even greater discrepancies in the experiences of Namibia's citizens. While former Owamboland became a war zone in the brutal twenty-year-long battle for Independence and the far-reaching consequences of the devastation that occurred touched the lives of all of its inhabitants, people in the central regions of Namibia experienced less traumatic effects of the armed struggle. The different memories produced from these spatially-specific histories create a fundamental problem for the unification of Namibia's citizenry today.

In addition to the essential challenge of difference, other factors such as increased migration, economic decline, a chronic housing shortage, escalating crime rates, and high levels of unemployment, provide formidable challenges to Namibia's young nation. In this setting, as Tapscott has warned, without the unifying goal of national liberation, the 'myths of homogeneity' that are crucial in the creation of a national identity (Verdery 1994:45) have considerably less staying power (Tapscott 1995:164).

In Hakahana, these factors mentioned above can be observed playing themselves out most noticeably between long-term residents of Omaruru and more recent migrants from Namibia's North. In what amounts to a kind of moral practice through which ideas about identity and community are debated, certain historical experiences are remembered while others are forgotten as memory is created and redefined in the narratives of Hakahana's residents.

The personal narratives, revealed during interviews taken over the course of my fieldwork, followed a number of different patterns of acceptance or rejection of ethnic and national identities and, in establishing the opinions residents of Hakahana maintained towards the State. For example, recent migrants spoke of unity, nationalism and freedom,

long-term residents of Omaruru tended to focus on what they perceived to be ethnic discrimination, the problems of joblessness, and the poverty they encountered in an independent Namibia. Recent migrants tended to comment on better social relations with Whites as a result of Independence, while, in contrast, informants who were long-term residents perceived a disintegration of the co-operative relationships once shared with white employers in the town and on nearby farms. These are but a few of the differences that emerged from the memory narratives of people living in Hakahana.

This chapter explores these narratives in order to gain insight into the divergent conceptions of history, identity and community and the relationships that they influence and enable both between fellow citizens and between Hakahana's residents and the State. Through an examination of the moral discourse contained in memory narratives, this chapter investigates the political and social appropriation of ethnic and national identities, as well as the development of micro-level fears of cultural and political hegemony. It explores the emergence of Independence as a temporal focal point around which people have begun to order their understandings of the present. Finally, it highlights the roles of history and memory in determining the ways Hakahana's residents imagine their lives and attempt to make sense of the world around them.

### **Memory and Hegemony**

The study of memory has long been an interest within anthropology, helping to develop its understanding of the links between the individual and society. From early functionalist understandings of the nature of memory as a socially programmed set of images and collective remembrances, to theories that integrated the influence of individual development into their analyses (highlighting the interdependence of society and the people who comprise it), anthropologists' conceptualisations of memory have varied greatly. More recently, anthropologists have begun to examine memory not only as a stabilising, homogenising factor existing within the realm of collective consciousness, but as a force of change within society and a site of human agency. Through its examination, memory has also been linked to other forms of cognitive engagement. As Tonkin informs us, 'Memory, when we look at



it, dissolves its boundaries and cannot be wholly distinguished from imagination or from thought itself' (Tonkin 1992:104).

Searching to understand the force of human agency in light of theories suggesting the collective nature of social memory, many anthropologists have chosen over time to adopt a 'presentist' approach, stemming from the psychology-based work of Maurice Halbwachs (1928). This approach argues for the greater importance of the present over the influence of history in determining people's imaginings of the past (Halbwachs 1928 cited in Carsten 1995).

It is only in recent years that theory surrounding the subject has begun to reflect an understanding of memory as both a product of history and a contemporary social force. It is from this theoretical perspective, inspired from Werbner's (1998) historical approach, that this chapter attempts to analyse memory through an understanding which,

takes it as problematic that intractable traces of the past are felt on people's bodies, known in their landscapes, landmarks and souvenirs, and perceived as the tough moral fabric of their social relations...The very passion in, for and against memory, keeping it alive, burying or killing it, disclosing, registering, textualising and recreating it, is also problematic in [such] analysis (Werbner 1998:2).

Drawing on historical understandings provided earlier in this thesis, this chapter investigates past and contemporary causes for the variation found in memory narratives within Hakahana. Despite the government's attempts to homogenise its citizens under a unified national identity, the varied histories that people have experienced in Namibia, based on their ethnic, class and spatial positioning within the country prior to Independence, produce new and formidable differences. These differences are readily observed in the memory narratives of Hakahana's residents which are characterised by highly differential, virtually dichotomous, notions of pre-Independence Namibian society. Additionally, both variants of narratives concerning life before Independence starkly contrast this era to that of post-Independence.

John and Jean Comaroff (1987), in their investigation of the nature of historical consciousness and its relation to culture, explore the 'rhetoric of contrast' as something that occurs widely in situations of rapid change. Through their analysis of historical consciousness among the Tshidi-Barolong, a South African Tswana people, they investigate the expression of Tshidi understandings of their modern situation through a consciousness of

history that 'evokes the making of the social world, past and present' (1987:193). Rather than the expression of a linear account of events, or an 'objective' chronicle, they found Tshidi constructions of the past to be most often found 'in the dynamic interplay of a series of distinctions: 'Contrasts which describe two radically different epochs that have come to coexist in time'(ibid:193). They postulate that 'suggestive oppositions' are most often invoked in situations where people are caught up in processes of radical change and are attempting to come to terms with their history.

Within Hakahana, 'suggestive oppositions' are often stated in order to contrast social life in Omaruru before and after Independence. As Ndahambelesa's quote exemplified in the previous chapter, for residents of Hakahana, remembering the past is often an exercise in differentiation that gives rise to imagining the present. Her imaginings of a situation today where 'the world has turned upside down', where 'the human being has turned into a baboon' create and convey dramatic ideas which, standing alone, comment on the instability of life in the present, but when presented in contrast to the past, also initiate a discussion of shifting moralities and the deterioration of previously held social values. The language Ndahambelesa uses to comment on contemporary occurrences within the world through a description of an almost apocalyptic scenario which includes the metamorphosis of human into a lower form of primate, poetically conveys the disturbing sense of uncertainty and insecurity that is central to the concerns of long-term residents throughout Hakahana.

The narratives of long-term residents differ greatly from those of recent migrants. As explained in chapter 5, due to their experiences of actively creating and exercising freedoms enabled by Independence, and their ready adoption of the ideologies put forth by Swapo, their use of suggestive oppositions reinforces a past-present divide that highlights the virtues of contemporary Namibian society over the society divided through the practices of colonialism and apartheid. Because of many people's abilities to contrast past atrocities of war and discrimination (that became ever more pervasive in the years preceding Independence), with the peace of today and the freedoms now enjoyed, memory narratives generally reinforce the moral validity of ideals such as 'freedom' and 'unity' in contrast to the corruption of before.

Not only are oppositions used to comment on the changing nature of social life within Omaruru, as we have begun to see, but they are also invoked to contrast the practices

and policies of the apartheid government to those of the current Swapo government. In the midst of a developing colonial nostalgia and greater discordance between the projected goals of Independence and the realities of life in Omaruru today, political rhetoric on the micro level, witnessed in Hakahana by its long-term residents, has begun to question the legitimacy of the current political order. Significantly linked to the discussion of the previous chapter regarding ethnic and national identity appropriation, this chapter explores the moral and political debates contained in memory narratives that question not merely what the State is and to whom it belongs, but also 'what can representation and belonging mean?' (Werbner 1996:16). Through the interviews of long-term residents of Hakahana, this chapter considers how these narratives and the daily sentiments of people represent a form of resistance to the political and ideological hegemony imposed through the rhetoric and practices of the State. Additionally, it examines the micro-level presence of recent migrants as an additional force in the implementation of the State's ideologies and practices and the ways identity and community are questioned and constituted in the negotiation of ideologies and moralities in the multi-ethnic setting of Hakahana.

This chapter utilises the definition of hegemony as a problematic, contested political process of domination and struggle to elucidate the dynamics of political life in Hakahana as it is played out through the creation and use of memory. Employing Gramsci's (1971) concept of transformism, and the notion of transformist hegemony developed more recently within anthropology (see Alonso 1994, Gupta 1992, Williams 1991) I examine the 'resistance [which] takes place under conditions of inequality that limit the power of subordinated subjects to redefine their status and their place in and contribution to the imagined national community' (Alonso 1994:398).

The following sections lead up to an examination of the State's relationship with its citizens by viewing the creation of memory as one example of the struggle occurring that attempts to challenge the new and transforming ideologies and practices of the current government. The assumption here is that each citizen of Hakahana possesses two theoretical consciousnesses through which he/she interprets and creates the world around him/her: 'One which is implicit in his 'sic' activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers [or fellow citizens] in the practical transformation of the real world; and one,

superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed' (Gramsci 1971: 326-27).

For some within Hakahana, these consciousnesses are more or less complementary as historical, ideological, cultural and political developments have supported similar ideals as are promoted on Namibia's macro level today. For others, these consciousnesses are, to a greater extent, contradictory, as historical, ideological, cultural and political developments that have arisen often impede the acceptance (passive or active) of nationalist, unifying ideologies today. As it occurs, through active or inactive commitment or resistance to the current hegemonic national culture put forth by the State, tensions are created and tempered, acted out and suppressed in a micro-level struggle that is articulated in various moments and memories by the citizens of Hakahana.

### **Remembering the Past and Making Sense of the Present**

During my first visit to Omaruru in 1996, my experiences of 'memory' were limited. At the time, Omaruru's citizens seemed still to be caught up in the spirit of Independence and the endeavour to forge a new, unified nation out of the diversity that surrounded them. However, occasionally I would be made aware of individual sentiments that seemed to be contrary to the spirit of others'.

One memory that is foremost in my mind is of a young Damara-speaking student to whom I had taught adult computer classes. Pulling me aside at the hitchhiking point where I had been talking with an Oshiwambo-speaking man, she cautioned me to be careful of him. This was nothing unusual as many people in Omaruru often attempted to protect me from harm as a naïvely friendly foreigner who might be prone to trouble. But later, when I asked why she had cautioned me so, her words which followed spoke of something beyond the concern she had for my wellbeing in an insecure situation. The explanation she provided of her distrust of the man with whom I was speaking did not contain concerns about talking with strangers or any insight she had into the history of that particular man, but was based on negative ethnic stereotypes and a great sense of fear for people who were 'coming and making trouble in Omaruru'.



As the year progressed, I was, on a few more occasions, enlightened to similar anxieties as those she expressed. These statements often conveyed growing concerns about the transformation of Omaruru's community based on the expansion of the town and the absorption of many new migrants. Omaruru's citizens discussed the effects of change ranging from the spread of AIDS, to rising crime rates, to the expanding use of witchcraft. This rhetoric conveyed challenged the very notion of 'unity in diversity' and reflected a growing insider-outsider divide.

Upon my return to Omaruru in 1998, it was easily discernible through answers received to the question of how Omaruru had changed, that these sentiments had been further entrenched. Not only did they continue to comment on the decreasing security and deterioration of community in Omaruru, but they were also expanded to encompass arguments that implicated State policies and practices in the decline of the township. The blind, unexamined acceptance of the ideology of freedom was also called into question by long-term residents of Omaruru as liberation and unity were goals of the government that had begun to show double-sided effects on the lives of individuals.

There was also a great deal of confusion expressed as to how far 'freedom' was supposed to be extended. One of the most common complaints was related to the law and its intervention in the disciplining of youth. Many had the fear that if they used corporal punishment in any way to discipline their children, they could have their children taken away. Through these instances, the law, directly connected with the new government and its concern with human liberties, was thought to be creating the problems of the next generation by disabling parents and privileging the rights of the individual child over the successful maintenance of 'community'.

In addition to the criticisms of the government that emerged through these discussions, an element of colonial nostalgia which I had not encountered during my previous stay in Omaruru was also frequently voiced. Time and time again, long-term residents of Omaruru demonstrated an ability to separate the overarching ideology of domination that supported Namibia's system of apartheid from what they perceived to be a well-functioning economic structure which allowed them greater access to jobs. 'The only thing that was wrong with the way the white people ran the country was apartheid'. This was an often repeated statement that served as a basis for contrast and comparison between

the past government and that of today. This comment frequently inspired reflections on the fundamental flaws of the current political practices within Namibia. It also managed to challenge the rhetoric of liberation put forth by the current government through suggesting the lack of absolute value in prioritising the practice of desired ideologies over the maintenance of sustainable livelihoods.

As I decided to focus my research in on Hakahana and began to interview more extensively the residents of this squatters' settlement, many of whom were recent migrants to Omaruru, a definite pattern emerged based on people's lengths-of-stay within the township. Through an analysis of these narratives and the contrasts that became visible, I gradually became aware of the force of Namibia's divided history and the power that memory holds in determining social and political relations within Hakahana today.

Through the exploration of people's remembrances, it becomes possible to see how people's memory narratives are demonstrative of attitudes and understandings today, and as well, how people's historical experiences prior to Independence influence the perceptions that are put forth. It is also possible to view how these narratives are often contrary to the histories revealed and are distorted through people's attempts to make sense of their lives and engage in a moral discussion about the present political and social realities they face.

Amongst Damara residents of Hakahana, most narratives of the past contain remembrances of growing up on nearby farms or in the township where they or their parents usually laboured for white employers. Their residence in Hakahana today is indicative of the economic shift which has taken place as many former white employers have either fled the country, or moved on to towns of bigger size in order to escape a failing farming industry.

For most, memories of life on nearby farms tend to have an almost fairy tale quality characterised by ethnic and racial harmony, an abundance of food, and the security of long-term employment. In reality, however, chronologies of people's lifetimes reveal frequent dismissals by white employers, the frequent undertaking of demographic adjustments to alleviate the effects of poverty, and forced discontinuation of primary schooling due to economic hardship. Through these narratives, it becomes obvious that, rather than necessarily providing a realistic account of past times, they are more often used to construct moral commentaries about life in Namibia today. The contrasts used to demonstrate such arguments are best seen as tools of expression which allow the listener to focus in on the

moral dynamic of the narrative and the poignant sense of loss that is experienced and conveyed.

For a more tangible demonstration of these characteristics within Damara narratives, let us now turn to an example taken from a life history conducted with Kristin, a 37 year old woman who was born in Omaruru and grew up in the township. In her words:

The time that I grew up in Omaruru, that was the time we were having respect for our elders. And we were trained that if we saw a boy, we were running away. That's how we were trained. At that time we were all playing together and having concerts and ceremonies at the school. It is only today that there is apartheid of the different ethnicity groups. But those days, Ubasen<sup>1</sup> was the only primary school here and we were all mixed up – Damara, Herero, Owambo, Coloured, Baster, Nama children – we were attending together at that school. And we all got along and spoke each other's languages. I went to that school until I was in standard 4 [grade 6], but at that time, the way of looking out for us and our support system was a little bit weak. That is why I dropped out. So I started working in the town. You know that those were the days people were not working for a lot of salary. People were working for clothes and food and a little bit of money. It was a time we didn't even know what money was. My family, we needed money for the living and while other kids were wearing nice and perfect underwear, you didn't have underwear. That was part of the problem why I left school. You know that if you don't have and others have, it isn't nice. The people I went to school with, most are still here in Omaruru. But today Omaruru has changed. I mean, in the time we were staying before, the time of South African rule, the killings were not even that high, but now killings are going higher and higher. I mean, you are not that safe to get up in the afternoon and go to the Damara location and buy sugar. If I go, on my way coming back by night I will see that there are men who are speaking the other language [Oshiwambo] who are standing there. What are they standing there alone for? Then I might be beaten up and raped and have all my money taken. These things are happening. And, I can take an example that there was a Damara guy who was met by night coming back from the Damara location to Hakahana that has been stopped and held and had a piece of his ear cut off. They have stopped him and tried to see if he had money, and because he didn't have money they went ahead and beat him and cut off his ear. This is the place we have come to look after our death here in Hakahana. Today, the way we are communicating, it is getting worse. We are not holding each other's hands. First, just after Independence, it was okay, but today there is no holding hands and we are killing each other.

Through Kristin's quote many common patterns of Damara memory narratives can be observed. The style in which she introduces the subject of life in Omaruru is one which paints a picture of an idealistic society where there is co-operation, security and ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> The primary school located in the Damara section of the location.

harmony. However, shortly after journeying through these fond memories of the past, the listener is made aware of the contradictions between reality and memory as we are told of hardships faced, and opportunities which were curtailed as a result of poverty. The contrasts she makes between life then and life now are stark and her examples of real life events which took place before and those which occur in the present are used as evidence of the negative changes that have occurred to the town since Independence.

Another pattern which is revealed is that of focusing on the moral deterioration of community in Omaruru based on the recent development of crime and the increased presence of Oshiwambo-speaking people. Her use of the phrase 'men who are speaking the other language' is also commonly iterated in Damara narratives in lieu of using more easily descriptive ethnic labels. Almost always, when asked to clarify the meaning of this phrase, the response was to name 'Owambo people'. One informant also mentioned 'Kavango people', but generally, all who are from the northern regions of Namibia are described by default as 'Owambo' by most residents of Omaruru. That Kristin (as well as many other informants), was hesitant to speak of ethnic distinctions when articulating these moral arguments is telling of the force of the ideologies promoted by the government and the contradictory consciousness possessed by long-term residents of Omaruru. The desire to participate in and appropriate the ideologies of a new and Independent nation is complicated for these citizens by the existence of previous ideologies of separatism. Experiencing a sense of loss and the uneasy transformation of long-standing community boundaries and norms, long-term residents struggle to make sense of the harsh realities of these changes while simultaneously attempting to preserve or even first locate for themselves a place within Namibia's new nation.

In reality, Omaruru's social structure has been greatly altered by the events that surrounded and followed Independence. As described in the introduction to this thesis, the changes that occurred between my first stay in 1996 and my second stay in 1998-9 were easily recognisable. Having spoken with people in all sections of Omaruru, and having, myself, been witness to increasing problems with alcoholism and crime within the township, there is little doubt that informants' descriptions of the changes they have been experiencing are laden with truth. However, there are also patterns within these narratives which have the



effect of totalising explanations of social and economic hardship in arguments against 'newcomers' to Omaruru's township.

Another observable pattern found in Kristin's quote above is that of widespread resistance to and resentment of being 'forced' to live in Hakahana. This is a phenomenon that stems from a feeling of displacement that many of Omaruru's long-term residents expressed. While Hakahana is now largely comprised of people who were sharing a less structured and less identified space in the squatters' settlement, the shift to their current location and the community formation that has been undertaken by local leaders has been greatly challenged by the residents themselves – particularly long-term residents of Omaruru. Beyond the inconvenience of living farther from town and other such complaints that Hakahana's residents put forth, it is most commonly communicated in people's narratives that the greatest reason for their disgruntlement involves their displacement from the larger community of Omaruru and the subsequent attempts of 'higher ups' to confine people to a 'community' where there is no desired unity. These developments will be further examined in chapter 7 in a discussion about the creation of Hakahana and the interaction between Namibia's micro and macro levels of society.

One pattern that is noted, and is specific to Damara narratives, is the tendency to suspect the ethnically motivated targeting of Damara people in calculated acts of aggression by recent Oshiwambo-speaking migrants. It is not unlikely that, due to propaganda issued by the apartheid government particularly during the 1980s aimed at creating paranoia about the prospects of Swapo rule, anxieties and fears of Owambo culture and people still influence people's micro-level interactions today. When I attempted to find out about every-day life in the central parts in the 1980's, a subject that has been little addressed in literature, Damara and Herero informants often told me stories of intimidation and fear by South African soldiers brought into schools and public meeting places. They also told of the circulation of stories that threatened the moral collapse of social life within Namibia's central regions due to a predicted Owambo cultural and political domination. Stories of Sam Nujoma (the current president and Swapo's leader) turning into a zombie when he became president; stories of Owambo people coming down and stealing people's husbands and wives; stories of Owambo men raping pregnant women, all were told to instil a fear of Oshiwambo-speaking people and create a moral argument about the necessity of resisting Swapo rule.

The narratives of many Damara informants in particular contain sentiments that echo the anxieties created and reinforced by the Administration's anti-Swapo propaganda. As well, sentiments are commonly uttered by Damara people that suggest the presence of a conspiratorial effort amongst Oshiwambo-speaking migrants to steal from people in the central parts and build up Owamboland through this criminal activity.

Some of these findings became evident at the time my bicycle was stolen in November of 1999. Rather than accept its disappearance as hopefully my last unfortunate encounter with theft during my stay in the field, I decided to attempt to get it back by offering a N\$100 (£10) reward for its safe return. This inspired much talk throughout Omaruru surrounding who the likely suspects were and how people planned to locate the bike and return it for the reward. It also inspired a great number of sympathetic sentiments from people who shared the frustration of having their property taken from them. The probable suspects in most of these conversations were always thought to be Owambo people, but the likelihood of being able to retrieve my bike was thought to be small, as most were sure that it was already travelling the B1 to Owamboland. It was from these discussions that often a larger one would spring concerning what was thought to be a conspiracy on the part of Owambo people to steal from the other ethnic groups in the central parts and build up their nation in the North. In this theory, it was thought that they would not steal from their own people, but only from white people and people of other ethnicities. The police force, which was comprised of greater and greater numbers of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, most of whom were returnees from the war, was also implicated in this conspiracy as they were perceived to employ a *laissez faire* attitude towards crime that was fostering the proliferation of criminal activity.<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen in Damara narratives and will now turn to in the context of those of Herero residents, the problem of crime and a loss of security is one that is central to the concerns of most long-term residents of Omaruru and is also commonly observed throughout the narratives of Herero informants as well as Owambo long-term residents of Omaruru (as was introduced with Ndahambelela's narrative). An additional example of these micro-level

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<sup>2</sup> In the end, my bike resurfaced in Hakahana at a man's house to whom it had been brought for repair. Recognising it as the much sought after vehicular apparatus, he sent word to me to collect it and received the reward – no questions asked.

concerns is found in a narrative of Sebulon, a 44 year old Herero long-term resident of Omaruru. As he explains, contrasting the past from the present:

Before things were better in our Namibia. Before it was a story of co-operation. We were not always working against each other. Yes, we were all under pressure, but there were not such stories of crime and killings. But today, the living around here is too hard. Namibia has become independent, but the lie that we are telling the children is that this country is now free. Now if you look at the government that was here before and the government that is now present, there is a big difference. If you get up right now and go to the hospital, maybe you are going to look for medicine because you have a kid who is sick here at home, if you get there, they will give you Panados and more Panados, because the strong medicine which should be there and is supposed to help cure the sickness is not in the hospitals anymore. I don't know in the millennium how this Namibia will turn out. Namibia has gone to the wrong side now. People are now looking in terms of the country being independent and everything is free now – they can do whatever they want. I mean, this government, which has come in with its rules, it's oppressing this country with that rule that a human being has rights. That human rights rule that they have put in, people are understanding that wrong. Because of this, things are not as they were before. When I leave my wife here at night now, I don't feel happy the time I am at work. I am worrying too much about her. Maybe I will reach there in the morning while she has been raped, beaten up, robbed. Those are fears that I am living with. And, as a Herero person, honestly, honestly speaking, I will tell you that this story is coming from the Owambo people. Hereros and Damaras, it is scarce, but mostly you will find it is the people who have come from the other side. We are all suffering here. I mean, I am living in a Namibian country and I am living here as a Namibian, but beside that, I will still tell you I am a Herero. I am voting for my party, the DTA [Democratic Turnhalle Alliance]. You know that this country is trying to overcome so that it can be ruled perfectly. It's why those parties are coming up. If this country is not being ruled perfectly, then the fighting will start. Didn't you see the fighting that started in the Caprivi? We want co-operation and we want communication. It's why we are not happy. They don't want that. Can't you see that in the government there are maybe three or four Hereros there. There are not equal numbers from all of the ethnic groups. I want the government to change so that they can see that Herero people are also people. Although we are from different ethnicity groups with different languages, they must realise that the Herero people have also been hurt.

Sebulon's comments, similar to those seen in the narratives of Damara people, demonstrate the micro-level concerns of Hakahana's residents regarding the increase of crime as a result of post-Independence migration. His contrasts are less dramatically illustrated than Kristin's, but the comparisons are still pursued between Namibia's previous society and its social structure today. His statements question the government's

indiscriminate prioritisation of civil liberties, suggesting the creation of a paradox in which freedom gives rise to oppression. His memories of Omaruru in the past not only contrast the situation in the present, but initiate a discussion of Namibia's future which demonstrates fears of the direction Namibian society is taking.

The simultaneously moral and political natures of his arguments, suggesting the inadequate governance of the State as a cause of local social decline, reveals the synthesis of micro-level experience with conceptions held of Namibia's macro level. This pattern, found in many narratives I was privy to during fieldwork, constitutes the political potential of the memory narrative as it sets forth critiques of the current government and often begins to challenge the legitimacy of its rule within Namibia.

In this same line of thinking, bridging the space between the micro and macro levels of society, it can also be observed how history and memory are vitally linked to identity formation and how this link subsequently constitutes people's relationships with the State. Lambek (1996) holds memory to be an intrinsic part of selfhood, such that memory and identity serve to mutually validate each other (Lambek 1996:243). Part of the overall concern expressed by Herero *and* Damara informants regarding the changing political and social realms of Namibian society, is that they, as members of their respective cultural groups are losing identity and importance as historical beings due to the over-prioritisation of 'liberation' and recent history in the construction of a Namibian identity. Sebulon's plea for the State's acknowledgement of histories other than that put forth and created in support of its continued right to govern Namibia speaks volumes about the importance of history and memory in the validation of 'selfhood'. His statement also simultaneously calls into question the either intentional or inadvertent suppression of other histories in the transformist hegemony that directs the country today in the name of national unity.

Within transformist forms of hegemony, 'State constructed past-present relations distinguish subjects according to a location vis-à-vis the time of nation's origin versus the time of the national future' (Alonso 1994:398). The concentration of the efforts to produce a Namibian 'history' and 'tradition' that have surrounded Independence have demonstrated the hegemonic prioritisation of temporalisations of history which are in line with the promotion of the current government's right to rule. The paucity of historical literature portraying the liberation struggle as it occurred within Namibia's central parts and the unwillingness of the



State to concede to a history that validates the actions of the country's citizens who were instrumental in national liberation through the support of political parties other than Swapo, leaves many citizens unable to fully engage with the rhetoric of nationalism. In this instance, national identity appropriation is complicated by the fear of hegemony and often inhibited by an inability of Damara and Herero citizens to locate themselves within the country's popularised nationalist history. Memory then becomes a volatile force in creating narratives that positions people in the present and often facilitates the adoption of well-known ethnic categories of identity over national identity as people struggle to maintain a sense of selfhood in the face of hegemony.

For a further example of the resistance to hegemony that takes place let us turn to the narrative of Emma, a forty-two year old Damara woman who has lived in Omaruru for twenty-two years. Her response was prompted by the question: 'How has Omaruru changed over the years you have lived here?' In her words:

First it was perfect, but after Independence it has got worse. There is no more life. First in the colonial time, things were in control – they were in order. There were jobs. You could even leave your house open without anything happening. But after Independence is the time the people who are speaking the other language and who are stealing too much have come in and they are taking things from the other people. They don't like us. It's why they are stealing our stuff. I have seen that they stab Damara people, they beat them up by night and take off their clothes. My life has gone downhill now because before Independence we were having the opportunity to get into a white man's farm and gather some veld food or gather some wood. But since the Owambo people have come into these central parts and started stealing from the white people there is no more chance for us to communicate with them as we did before. And the government! Is there a government now? I mean, we are all black people, but if you apply for a job, you, as a Damara, will be cut off and an Owambo will get the job because they are looking for the surname first. If they see there's a click, you are cut off.

Through this example, the simultaneous moral and political nature of the memory narrative is vividly illustrated. Once again, the dichotomization Emma describes of life before and after Independence and the highly immoral activities taking place on the micro level through daily interaction with Owambo people, including their dislike of Damaras, are used to introduce and validate her suspicions of macro level ethnic discrimination. Rohde suggests that 'th[e] conflict between ethnic and national identity is central to post-colonial Namibian politics, but the way in which it is manifested in Damara discourse is indicative of

[their] long history of political and economic marginalisation' (1997:217). Irrespective of this, however paranoid or justified Emma's fears are, they are produced under real social and economic circumstances through the use of learned categories of reason and experience. The changes Emma describes to life in Omaruru are not superficial, but rather, suggest a dramatic (perhaps even traumatic) shift from a predictable society in which the parameters of social relations were oppressive, and yet defined, to one in which the social boundaries are in constant flux.

A concern amongst most long-term residents of Hakahana that is well-demonstrated in Emma's narrative, and one that is often linked to sentiments of colonial nostalgia, is that of the deterioration of Black-White relations within Omaruru. The increase in theft and other crimes against white people, attributed to recent migrants to Omaruru, is seen as directly linked to increasing economic hardship for long-term residents as they have experienced a shift in access to farms and foods growing in the outlying areas due to increased security and enclosure of these spaces. The deterioration of these relationships is also felt within the township as many tell stories of going to ask for jobs and being turned away with the statement 'Go ask your president for a job'. These statements build a growing resentment of the government and contribute to suspicions of manipulation by a wider force including the local supporters of the government.

A final observation from Emma's narrative is based on her comment referring to a sort of surname game that is being played within Namibia today. One of the most direct effects of increased migration has concerned the number of jobs available within Namibia's central parts. Due to economic shifts discussed previously, many long-term residents, and certainly most of those within Hakahana, have been experiencing greater and greater hardship in attempting to find employment. This fact, coupled by the State's prioritisation of finding jobs for returnees from the war, as promised at Independence, results in suspicions of ethnic discrimination in opportunities for government employment.

In all, the memory narratives of Hakahana's long-term residents reflect a growing discontent for macro-level political practices and growing fears of micro-level violence and theft – both of which feed into the expanding need to resist hegemonic forces at work. Richard Werbner has described Africa's boom in colonial nostalgia, the efflorescence of state memorialism, and popular counter-memory as the results of a memory crisis 'that feeds

and is fed by the feeling that everyday life no longer has its taken-for-grantedness' (Werbner 1998:1). The word 'crisis' is perhaps a bit strong when applying Werbner's observation to the Namibian context, however, along with the moral nature of these judgements and opinions found in memory narratives such as Sebulon's and Emma's there is also contained the political challenge to the legitimacy of the current government. These challenges have the potential to become problematic within Hakahana as fears of Owambo neo-colonialism, implanted by the apartheid Administration, combined with people's attempts to make sense of their lives today, result in the destabilisation of ethnic relations and national unity becomes a challenged goal.

The following sections explore the memory narratives of Oshiwambo-speaking recent migrants to Omaruru and, from an ethnographic perspective, begin to demonstrate the effects that the varied political and social perspectives of Hakahana's citizens have on the creation and maintenance of community.

### **Remembering and Forgetting in the Narratives of Recent Migrants**

In contrast to narratives of long-term residents of Omaruru, one pattern readily observed in the narratives of recent Owambo migrants is the tendency to concentrate on the present and the future, rather than on the past. Their remembrances often contain indications of violence or hardship as a result of colonialism and the prolonged struggle in the North, but these are quickly abandoned and seldom expanded upon. Through brief mention of the injustices of the past, contrasts are made in moral arguments about the improved living conditions and governmental practices of today. The following paragraphs will explore the reasons behind this pattern. However, as a point of departure which provides us with an idea of what life was like before Independence, I turn now to an exceptional interview in which the informant, Martin, a 26 year-old Oshiwambo-speaking man. He lived in Owamboland up until 1992, but his mother and father were located in Omaruru. Due to his situation, his narrative is not indicative of most recent migrants in the sense that his well-established ties to Omaruru provide him with different social opportunities. However, his narrative is useful in allowing us a glimpse of what some of the memories from life before Independence are possibly like and helps us to better understand the avoidance of recounts of history and memory in the

narratives of most Oshiwambo-speaking recent migrants. As he describes in answer to the question, 'How has Namibia changed over your lifetime?':

You know that time when I grew up it was colonial times and since 1990 the country has changed. Before we were beaten in Owamboland and terrible things happened. Things were very bad sometimes. In Owamboland they would come to us and ask us for information about the soldiers and we would say, "No, we don't know where they are", and they would say "You are talking foolish, saying that crap, so we have to beat you". They would come and shoot our livestock so we would have nothing to eat. And many people would just start shooting. Oh, Namibia today, it's still getting better. When I think about that time, sometimes I just start to cry. Because many things were bad at that time. I am proud of my country today because first, before Independence, if I came to visit my parents and bought a new bike and I brought it here, then the police would come and confront me about where my papers were for the bike and all that. And by night, they would come and confront us about who else is living here, how many people are living here? But today we are free. I am free to live here. There are no such things. We have privacy.

Martin's narrative provides what is often a missing factor in the narratives of most recent migrants. His descriptions of the all-invasive presence of the war in the North and the violence and injustice that became standard components of life for those in the region, provide us with some understanding of possible psychological benefits of the tendency of many recent migrants to focus on the present and the future, rather than returning to the past. Amongst many recent migrants, in fact, there even appears to be a willingness to forget the past. Memories and references to the past are quickly abandoned and used merely as springing points for discussions of the moral and political soundness of life in Namibia today. In this practice, Owambo migrants, similar to the pattern found in narratives of long-term residents, use selective oppositions to contrast life before and after Independence and to create moral arguments in support of the present social and political order.

There are other plausible reasons why migrants demonstrate such a tendency that may have more to do with their social status within Omaruru and an attempted social strategy. As migrants to a new community, the practice of forgetting also enables them to integrate themselves more easily into social life in Omaruru. Janet Carsten, in her analysis of the politics of forgetting in Southeast Asia observes how, 'forgetting is an important part of the creation of a shared identity' (1995:318), 'the way people forget, and what they forget are not random but systematic and patterned' (1995:313). For Owambo migrants in Omaruru, forgetting the past, or drawing from it only particular memories that position them in the



present as free Namibian citizens, is more socially advantageous than focussing on their different historical experiences during the liberation struggle. As well, having long embraced the message in Swapo's call for 'one Namibia, one nation', most recent migrants insist on the unimportance of difference in all its forms, and the lack of validity of ethnicity as a category of identity. Some even express offence or dismay at its use.

Barth suggests that, 'being matters of identity, ethnic group membership must depend on ascription and self-ascription: only in so far as individuals embrace it, are constrained by it, act on it, and experience it will ethnicity make organisational difference' (1994:12). It would seem that the expressed rejection of the legitimacy of ethnicity by these migrants, and their desire to dissolve the boundaries of difference constituted within Namibia's past would diminish the importance of this form of identity within Hakahana. However, as migrants with usually limited or no familial support networks in Omaruru, reliance upon a developing system of intra-ethnic support makes the use of ethnicity a practical strategy. This phenomenon is also encouraged and facilitated, as a result of the linguistic isolation that is sometimes experienced by migrants from Namibia's North whose English is often limited and who have usually no knowledge of Afrikaans. Many tell stories of being assisted by fellow Owambo people upon their arrival in Omaruru. As one informant noted, 'You see, in our culture, if somebody speaks your language, they are your family. You can even share accommodation'. So, while narratives of Owambo migrants show a deep, moral commitment to nationalism and a rejection of ethnicity as a divisive category rooted in colonialism, the social and economic realities faced in Omaruru as a destination town make self-ascription of this category of identity a functional exercise in economic, social, and political survival.

For an example of what is a more common narrative, and one that contains the characteristics listed above, let us turn to the life history given by Paulina, a 35 year-old female informant who migrated to Omaruru in 1991 after serving in the Namibian Defence Force (NDF):

First my sister and I were with our father and then our father was killed by the colonial officers. After that we were having no life, so my grandfather took us up to the North to Angola. And up there life was a little bit good. There are no more colonial white guys staying up there as there are here in Namibia. After that, our country has become independent and today we are having a better life than we were having before. We have got our independence and now we have our own jobs too. The South Africans told us to go to our president and he will

give you a job because you were fighting against me. After that the President tried to find jobs for us who were helping him up in the North and we found jobs. I've got a job now as a policewoman. So now we are happy. You see that today we have got our jobs, but we are struggling too, selling our *tombo* [home brew]. The time we came here we found Omaruru in a colonial system. Through all these years it is getting better up until now. The time we came, there was no chance for us to speak with a white guy, to stand and laugh with him. But now, I can hang around with him, speaking with him and laughing with him. And now, all the ethnicity groups are understanding each other better because we are mixed up today. When we came here, Omaruru itself was divided into ethnicity groups – Damara location, Herero location, the side where the Basters were staying and so on...Today you see that people are mixed up but you can see that the people are staying together more. There is much more communication than there was before. As we are here, we are different ethnicity groups so we are not specifying who is who, but what we do is, everyone is trying to learn another one's cultural identity. Namibia is doing better today. First there was no university, there were not enough hospitals, there were not enough schools. Right now they have built new school buildings and hospitals. There have come in new factories too. Up in the North, where I am staying, they have built a nice hospital, a hospital even bigger than this Omaruru hospital and they have built new schools so that the children can go to nearby schools. I will return there soon. I have hope for my children that they can get a better education so that they can pass the exams and some of them can get office jobs so that they can come back and take care of me in my old age.

Similar to the idyllic images painted of Namibia's past by many long-term residents, recent migrants often describe Namibia's present society and government in a like manner. The perception of a steady development of racial and ethnic communication and co-operation since her (Pauline's) arrival in 1991, and the contrast of these observations to those held by long-term residents, is, admittedly, at this point of my argument, a bit hard to imagine. But indeed, these perceptions were not exceptional. Pauline's quote reveals many of the patterns common to the narratives of most Oshiwambo-speaking recent migrants and also uncovers some of the reasons for the staggering contrasts between these narratives and those of long-term residents.

Much as in the memory narratives of Damara and Herero people, Owambo people's narratives tend to focus on Independence as a pivotal point in their life histories. However, for Owambo migrants, unlike long-term residents, Independence is described as a positive event - a turning point in power relations that secured the enjoyment of freedoms previously suppressed. The acquisition of these rights provides an indisputable, experienced benefit of Independence that serves as a crucial point of contrast between the past and the present – one

that reflects on the injustices inflicted by the colonial government and substantiates the legitimacy of the current order.

Her explanations of Independence and the achieved goals of the government are based on ideals not fully shared by long-term residents. Her concentration on equality and independence from White power structures of the past are goals and benefits not achieved or experienced by all. Her advantage in having claims to job opportunities through service in the NDF contrasts her perceptions of the struggle for employment from those of many long-term migrants who are still more reliant on white citizens of Omaruru for jobs.

Her pride in the current government and the direction Namibia is taking are also feelings much less often conveyed in the narratives of long-term residents. Achievements she lists within Namibia as a result of Independence are also subject to historical perspective. For most residents of Hakahana, the creation of a Namibian University is a symbolic, rather than a tangible achievement and one that is hard for many to appropriate as their concerns are often more limited to the acquisition of food and other resources to better their lives. But on a more basic level, the circular migration which is still undertaken by many recent migrants (and in her case is enacted during sowing and cropping seasons), and her short-term goal of returning to her home in the North, allow her an awareness of and an ownership of the great amounts of development that have been occurring therein. For long-term residents of Omaruru, an opposite experience is communicated, as we saw in their narratives above, where people speak of witnessing the deterioration of once well-functioning public health and education systems and the closing of factories long in existence.

A final pattern that is found in Paulina's narrative is in her ability to envisage a positive future for herself, her children and Namibia. The steady progress she describes of life in Omaruru and the successes of the government which she notes, lead to the conveyance of a hopeful, forward thinking aesthetic throughout her narrative which is completely opposite in nature to the majority of narratives of long-term residents. The differences which emerge through an analysis of memory narratives of both long-term residents and recent migrants are indicative of the varied perceptions which are created as a result of the historical inequalities experienced by the residents of Hakahana. These perceptions and the visions they inspire are not confined to a debate of moralities, but also include a discussion about political life in Namibia today.

As we investigated above for long-term residents, political commentary within memory narratives is usually characterised by the use of contrasts between the past and present government and is intertwined with a moral argument about life in Omaruru before and after Independence. While the same is often true of memory narratives of recent Owambo migrants, it is also common that narratives will take a more forward, directed approach in arguing the soundness of the present political system and in questioning the morals and objectives of those who challenge its rule. Much of this rhetoric arose not only in people's narratives, but throughout Omaruru in the latter half of my fieldwork as the Congress of Democrats (COD) was created (on March 23, 1999) and hailed to be the first true opposition party Swapo had ever faced. With the slogan, 'A New Beginning', the COD began campaigning on the platform that they desired to serve as a catalyst for much needed change within Namibia after a decade of rule under a government which 'loot(s) the public treasury shamelessly, believing that Namibia is indebted to them for bringing about freedom'. Headed by Ben Ulenga, former Swapo Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Housing and later, in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the party became what residents of Hakahana referred to as the 'not fair party', and offered a potential opponent to Swapo in the 1999 elections as the first opposition party founded on a premise which also promoted a unified Namibia<sup>3</sup>.

For an example of the political nature of memory narratives let us turn to an excerpt from the life history of Phillip, a 29 year-old man who moved to Omaruru in 1998 from Owamboland. In his words:

When we hit Independence that was when my life changed because when South Africa was ruling the country we Owambo people were really suffering. That time was very bad. All things that were good happened after Independence because now I am free. Even if I want to go to Caprivi, I can go. As long as I got people over there, then I can communicate with them very well. And the education was raised up because even now I can join the University of Namibia as long as I have a bursary. One thing I am not understanding is how this new party, the COD [Congress of Democrats] is trying to cut off the peace. Why doesn't Ben Ulenga [the President of the COD] want to accept the others in whom the people trusted? Now he doesn't want to co-operate with the others. Maybe he wants to be president. But it is a big question to me why the opposition party always wants to cut off the peace. I am satisfied with the situation we have now because I have experienced the war.

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<sup>3</sup> This is in contrast to the ethnically-based political parties established before Independence including the DTA (Herero), UDF (Damara), SWANU (Herero), and MAG (Afrikaans).



In these arguments, memory becomes both moral and political as those who challenge the government are also seen to challenge the existing peace and freedom within Namibia. In the example above, Phillip also uses his historical experience to explain his moral reasoning against the otherwise democratic actions of Ben Ulenga. Through such uses of memory, in the context of postcolonial yet oral culture, Roseman suggests that 'invoking the past has perhaps even more rhetorical force, for speakers are able to refer to events their "eyes have seen", a statement that implies an assertion of both truth and moral authority' (Roseman 1996 cited in Cole 1998:106). While Phillip's statement contains a reasoning that is useful in a moral defence of the present political order, it is also important to keep in mind that his memories of war and his ability to contrast those unstable, quite traumatic experiences with the peace found in Namibia today, are factors most likely informing his beliefs. In this situation, without ever having observed a peaceful and democratic shift of power from one government to the next, and with the influence of the lingering memories of war, democratic process itself becomes a feared and uncertain experience.

The political sentiments expressed in Phillips narrative and shared by many other recent migrants, while understandable from the perspective provided above, are no less problematic as a result of this exploration. Within Hakahana, the existence of such misunderstandings of the democratic process, and the fear that surrounds the possibility of change, lead to the presence of hegemonic forces. These forces are often supported by the government's rhetoric, and result in a micro-level presence which helps to govern social and political life within the squatters' settlement and beyond.

This hegemonic presence became most pronounced in the final months of my fieldwork, due to the increased political rhetoric surrounding the upcoming elections in December of 1999. As violence against those who were organising and supporting the new COD escalated throughout Namibia, within Hakahana there was also growing fear and intimidation and the occasional incident of politically-motivated physical aggression. Until that time, the presence of hegemony in the daily rhetoric and memory narratives of Hakahana's residents had remained more subtle and was expressed in less overt ways. However, as tension grew both locally and nationally, the rhetoric people employed to discuss their political and moral views became more direct and would often contain threatening sentiments.

In the end, much of this aggression dissipated immediately after the elections, however, the lingering memories of violence and intimidation that accompanied the settlement's encounter with democracy left many long-term residents expressing, with greater and greater regularity and conviction, their hopelessness for Namibia's future and their lack of desire to participate in political processes. Shortly after the election I finished my fieldwork and left to return home, so the delayed results of these developments remain unknown to me. It is likely, however, that politics in Hakahana were, once again, consigned to memory.

## **Conclusion**

Richard Werbner argues that within anthropology there is a pressing need to rethink our understanding of the force of memory, 'its official and unofficial forms, its moves between the personal and the social in postcolonial transformations' (1998:2). In this chapter I have attempted to rise to this challenge by examining the ways moral assertions about community, identity and political legitimacy are debated through micro-level memory narratives in Hakahana today.

It has been argued here that, as a means of defusing discord, political and social tensions in Hakahana should be carefully analysed, not as the result of a particular conflict-causing form of difference, but within the context of Namibia's divided history as products of people's everyday attempts to make sense of the world around them. Through an examination of the differential collective memories of people from Namibia's North and those of its central and southern regions it becomes possible to understand the varied social and political perspectives of individuals sharing a common national identity.

Calling upon Gramsci's adaptations of Marxist theory, the picture painted within Hakahana is one which necessitates the questioning of the power of experience and mental life on the micro level and its interplay with macro level governance. Departing from classical Marxism, Gramsci's notions of 'base' and 'superstructure', similar to what I refer to here as the micro and macro levels of society, are connected, 'not in linear causality, but circular interaction within an organic whole' (Lears 1985:570). Within a transformist hegemony however, such as is argued here, existing inequality often limits the power of

subordinated subjects to redefine their place in and contribution to the imagined national community (Alonso 1994:394), a situation which can dangerously disrupt a stable symbiotic flow between the micro and macro levels of society.

The following chapter looks more closely at this relationship between the micro and macro levels of society and the effects of the political and social divisions discussed in this chapter. Through an examination of the creation of Hakahana in the theoretical context of producing locality, it attempts to provide greater ethnographic understanding of the processes thus far examined and the influence of macro-level policies in the social, political and spatial production of Hakahana

## Chapter Seven

### Producing and Reproducing Locality in Hakahana

When I first became aware of Hakahana's existence, shortly after my arrival in Omaruru in 1998, I began to ask people I knew living in the main location, Ozondje, how and why it was created. At this point, I had not yet been to see Hakahana for myself, and was not intending to conduct my fieldwork there, but rather, intended to begin my research in Ozondje, the town, and the (then former) squatters' settlement, as was planned before my departure for the field.

The descriptions of Hakahana presented by those I questioned were part of the reason I became so intrigued and later refocused my research within the settlement. Nobody with whom I spoke expressed neutral feelings about Hakahana. And while I was expecting answers to my questions to concern development schemes or descriptions of the process of relocation, most residents of Ozondje seemed more concerned with the concentration of criminal activity and the dangers involved in going into the settlement. I was cautioned by friends to be very careful in my dealings with people in Hakahana and, by no means, to stay in the settlement after dark.

When I asked who was living in Hakahana and was informed it was the people who had previously lived in the squatters' settlement next to the Herero location, I was further intrigued, as I had never heard such sentiments or concerns about these people in their former location. In fact, during my stay in 1996, I was often directed to the squatters' settlement for such things as inexpensive shoe repair and purchasing baskets. It seemed that, through the creation of Hakahana as a locality separate from Ozondje, the identity of its residents was somehow altered, and what was once an integrated part of the wider community, was now its own neighbourhood that came with a separate identity and a history all its own.

At a later juncture in my fieldwork, the elements involved in these opinions of Hakahana began to manifest themselves with more clarity. As my involvement in life in Omaruru developed, at one point, having heard from so many informants that the litter scattered throughout Hakahana was one of their concerns, I helped, along with Rebecca, a Peace Corps volunteer teaching at the local high school, to organise a 'Clean-up Day' in Ozondje and Hakahana. On the day of the project, students of Rebecca's classes helped to



organise the distribution of municipality-supplied rubbish bin liners and Coca Cola products donated by the distributors, as well as any other last-minute tasks that needed to be done. After completing the leg of the project conducted in Ozondje, we headed toward Hakahana where almost nobody had shown up to help. At this point, not wanting the Hakahana section of the project to fail, I decided to go through the streets, where there were always children playing, and announce that the 'Clean-up Day' was taking place. I drafted a young 7<sup>th</sup> grader to come with me, a child I knew from the Ojambo location of Ozondje, and we set off to gather helpers. Once we were a few metres into Hakahana, however, she began to pull on my arm stopping me from going farther. When I asked her why she wanted to stop, she told me that she was scared. That the people living there in Hakahana were practising witchcraft and would maybe see her and wish her harm. I told her that I travelled through Hakahana daily and no harm had come to me, but she insisted that her aunt had told her it was a bad place and that she was afraid to go with me.

It was through this occasion I began to more fully understand the importance of examining Hakahana's production as a locality, and its social creation, not only of an ethnoscape within, but also through an oppositional relationship to the larger community of Ozondje. The space on which Hakahana was formed, a former municipal rubbish dump, was not seen merely as a new location for the squatters' homes, but also as its own ecological, social and cosmological terrain (Appadurai 1996:180) derived from the larger community and subsequently constituted as a place both spatially and socially separate.

As discussed in the previous chapter in the context of divergent memories, people's acceptance or rejection of Hakahana was discernibly linked to their status as recent migrants or long-term residents. Recent migrants, without exception, expressed their happiness with the shift to Hakahana and the greater access to facilities available in comparison to that in the former squatters' settlement, or to their regions of origin. Whereas, long-term residents were generally disenchanted with the facilities available in Hakahana and complained of the crime and its far distance from the town, among other things. Further research helped to clarify my understanding of some of the opinions expressed by long-term residents regarding their troubled existence in Hakahana. Additionally, the varied perceptions of Hakahana held by its residents, and the political sentiments that accompanied such perceptions, elucidated some of the reasons why, after a few months of living in the plots assigned by the

municipality, people began to reorganise Hakahana into more ethnically-homogenous sections.

In all, further research within Hakahana and participation in ongoing organisational meetings, allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the local and national contexts from which Hakahana was produced. And through an investigation of Hakahana as a multiplex interpretive site, where its production and reproduction requires the 'continuous construction, both practical and discursive, of an ethnoscape' (Appadurai 1996:184) I also became aware of the context that it *generated* both within and beyond its boundaries.

In this chapter, I examine more closely the production and reproduction of Hakahana as a locality, investigating the role of the State and local leaders in the development of the settlement, as well as the role of its inhabitants in resisting and transforming Hakahana as a neighbourhood. This is done recognising the need to re-conceptualise the politics of community, solidarity, identity, and cultural difference in light of the current re-territorialisation of space that is symptomatic of the present age of post-modernity (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:9). I highlight the attitudes and objectives identified on both the local and national levels by citizens and government officials alike, from the stories of its initial production in October of 1997, to the dynamics of its reproduction that were observed during my fieldwork. It is possible, through this analysis, to see how the power relations affecting Hakahana's development extend beyond the local, and result in a dialectic between its citizens and the State, as the government's attempts to organise community and homogenise its citizenry effectively result in the greater production of difference (Williams 1991a).

### **Hakahana's Creation**

Although one might expect to find a tale of genesis at the *beginning* of a piece of work, it is my belief that the story of Hakahana's creation can only be understood as it is placed here, with the prerequisite knowledge provided in the previous chapters. Without an understanding of the historical factors contributing to the creation of difference and an understanding of the articulation of different moralities highlighted in chapter 6, the rhetoric that surrounds the topic of Hakahana's formation would be much more difficult to understand, much as it was for me at the beginning of my fieldwork.

In this section, I analyse, not the actual events which surrounded Hakahana's initial creation (as I was not there to witness them), but the rhetoric encountered during my fieldwork that continued to surround the events as they were remembered by Hakahana's inhabitants. By comparison and contrast to recounts of the events given by the technical manager and the deputy manager of the municipality (responsible for implementing the relocation), the stories surrounding Hakahana's creation begin to reveal the dynamics of power relations that help to govern and produce local attitudes toward the State.

When I arrived in Omaruru in September of 1998, Hakahana was already a year in existence, and the first political negotiations between the municipality and the inhabitants of the former squatters' settlement had occurred 6 months prior to that. Despite the time that had lapsed, however, people were still arguing, discussing and debating the injustices brought upon them by the actions that surrounded the move. Likewise, there was a great deal of speculation concerning the intentions of the government in their repositioning.

I must admit, however, it was difficult to understand at first how people could be so disgruntled about the space they now occupied. There *were* problems with latrines becoming full or water not being available at all times of the day. However, generally, the organised space, the increased services provided in Hakahana, and the flourishing gardens that decorated the settlement in vibrant colours, all seemed like positive developments that had arisen as a result of the relocation. It was not until I had the chance to speak with long-term residents throughout Hakahana, that I began to understand that their unwillingness to value the land as a space, and their rejection of the identity that came with belonging to Hakahana as a place, were tied up in negative sentiments and experiences involved in its creation.

The simple question of how Hakahana came to exist prompted emotionally-charged responses by long-term residents. These responses challenged, not only the local actions of individuals seeking to organise and develop Omaruru in ways seen as misguided, but also the actions of a new Namibian government that was thought to be incapable of, or unwilling, to assist its citizens.

The stories of Hakahana's creation told by its long-term residents contained common recounts of threats by the municipality, the appearance of bulldozers, and undemocratic decision-making processes. These injustices were thought to have stemmed from the

involvement of the government (with no distinction made between the local or national level) and were the corrupt actions which eventually forced people out of the former squatters' settlement. However, municipality officials, when interviewed, not surprisingly, described the creation of Hakahana in a very different manner. In the deputy manager's own words:

The idea came out of the council of the Omaruru Municipality. One reason was that it was a little unattractive for us to have the squatters' camp where one enters the township. Secondly, it was unorganised. There were no plots set out for individual houses. After that, we identified a specific area to where the people must move...It was not a matter of must move. We, in fact, thought that services must be provided, but in an unorganised set up it was difficult for us to provide the most needed services such as water and sewage...After the council's decision, we contacted the community license officer...We conducted several meetings. In fact, it was not by force, but we promised certain services that they w[ould] enjoy if they agree[d] to move...We held meetings at the Ozondje municipality office outside. We established a squatters' committee from the squatting community – their own people...We told them it would be much easier if we communicated through a committee. They elected the committee themselves and we used to contact the members. Also, we had meeting after meeting after meeting. In the beginning they didn't want to move...What happened in fact was, they refused to move and later on we surrendered our intentions. And we said, alright, if you want to stay here, fine. We're not going to bulldoze you from this spot. And all of the sudden the request came from them, 'No, we want to move, can you help with transport and those types of logistics'. And we said, 'Alright, that was our main intention, so we will help out with any logistics'. And the Katutura, or the move, started. (For full transcript of interview see Appendix C).

It is not questioned here whether or not the municipality's intentions were simply to provide good governance within Omaruru. However, the interview did reveal that there were ambiguities and contradictions concerning their attitudes toward the squatters' themselves; enough to cast doubt on the practices and motivations that were involved in the relocation. For example, although repeatedly acknowledging the idea as originating from the Omaruru municipality through a concern for providing better services to local residents, it is also revealed that the creation of these settlements are part of a plan being implemented throughout central Namibia in order to make these spaces more legible for good governance, and more profitable for the individual municipalities. In fact, it was later remarked in the course of the interview, that President Nujoma, himself, during his last official visit to Omaruru, pledged his support to the municipality in the event that they need to control



Hakahana's development by setting up boundaries and taking action against those who attempt to expand them.

Another example of mixed motivations, found in the statements given by the deputy manager, is in regards to the purpose behind the move. During the interview he varied between referring to the move as an act in the interest of selling the land and cleaning up the property, to one that was in the interest of the squatters' themselves. While these are not necessarily contradictory arguments, they do permit speculation as to who Hakahana's creation was aimed to benefit most.

By the conclusion of the interview, it did become apparent that creation of Hakahana was undertaken primarily to create a 'legibility' (Scott 1998) within a growing community of migrants and possible dissenters; Increased legibility that would assist in further disciplinary and organisational efforts of the government. Scott poses 'legibility' as a primary goal of the modern state that invokes practices which arrange 'the population in ways that simplif[y] the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion' (1998:2). These goals were revealed by the deputy manager of the municipality to be shared by local and national leaders as efforts were being undertaken to combat what was considered to be a developing situation of violence and disorganisation brought about by increased migration and the overall expansion of Omaruru. The deputy manager addressed these concerns while commenting on the criminality of those who challenged the municipality's actions. He also commented on the power struggle that took place between the municipality and these criminals in attempting to influence the people of the squatters' settlement. As he stated, 'Obviously, some members of that community were in fact criminals, but they wanted to hide in that community. They didn't want an organised structure because then the people would identify them. Even the police were looking for them. So those were the people who were instigating the people not to move, and used their reasons not to move.'

In the interview, it was discernible that the perception of a growing need for legibility on the part of the municipality, increased migration to the township, rising rates of physical assault or death within the settlement, and the subsequent devaluation of Hakahana as a locality are all interconnected. In the larger community of Ozondje, these factors appear to be creating a disabling cycle in which Hakahana's residents and local leaders, acting on

behalf of Omaruru's citizenry, are engaged in a power struggle that results in the alienation of Hakahana's inhabitants from the wider community of Ozondje.

What is also clear from the examination of both the stories told by Hakahana's residents and those of the municipality is that the production of Hakahana was seen by all participants as an action that involved fundamentally translocal power relations. Appadurai notes that the complexities that define the world today dictate that 'the production of neighbourhoods increasingly occurs under conditions where the system of nation-states is the normative hinge for the production of both local and translocal activities' (1996:187-188). The centralisation of power implemented by Namibia's current government has created more immediate systems of control over the localised municipal practices within Namibia's central parts, and a greater presence in the daily lives of the people. This presence and control is most often resented by long-term residents within Hakahana, and mistrust and subsequent resistance abounds.

The following excerpt from an interview with Daniel, a 63 year-old Damara man who was born in Omaruru demonstrates some of the concerns of these citizens and the dynamics that appear to be influencing further relations between long-term residents and the government. As he states:

Omaruru was quite well in past times. The times we were gardening and all it was going forward. Here where we are today, these were watering places for the cattle. Since then, the clever people have come into this township and it's when things have changed because they are saying we are able to change this place into a big town. And now they have moved us down here only to find the toilets they promised are filled up, and the water they promised, we only have that some of the time...It's the government that has been put in that has come up with all this crap. I mean, things have started after Independence – this corruption that is here in this whole country right now. We just know that the country has become independent, but we don't see the independence of the country. We don't feel it that we are independent. We just know the word. A short time ago I was working on a project here with Velia [a councilwoman in Omaruru] where we were cropping and I was in charge of the project. Then they started to build this football stadium that you see there and they were complaining that the football stadium needed water and the water from our project must go there. So, after a while our crops have died. I wasn't even getting paid for that, but I was getting food from what we were harvesting...If the guys who are sitting at the top positions would just tell us the truth, then we could feel a little bit proud of the country, but if they are just sitting down there telling lies, then it is hard to be happy with them. The only time we even see them is when we are having festivals, but after that, we are just seeing each

other like animals. They are there. We are here. It's how they have left us here in this Hakahana.

Daniel's statements, much like those given by most long-term residents of Omaruru, demonstrate a tendency to view his interests at odds with those of the current government. He and other informants also express a distrust of the government's intentions to improve the town and a tendency to resist its involvement in their lives in whatever form that may take. This is often observed through complaints that before they could live how they wanted, but now, if they want to do anything they have to go through a middle man, Paul, the municipality worker responsible for ground management of Hakahana.

These negative feelings concerning any administrative involvement in their lives are perhaps due to the historical refinement of a dialectical relationship between the individual and the government. This is particularly possible as, through the relocations that occurred throughout apartheid, negative associations with the government's involvement in the production of locality have been developed. However, there are also concerns stated that indicate that people see the more recent problems of the government's involvement in their lives as a specific product of Namibia's new-found desire to constitute itself as a nation-state, while neglecting the greater needs of the people.

As Daniel's comments bring to light, it is commonly thought that, in recent years, many of the decisions being made by locally appointed or elected officials appear to be geared towards goals of improving Omaruru's landscape and memorialising the new government's presence in Omaruru, rather than assuring food security or other forms of welfare for its citizens. Swapo, with its slogan of 'Peace, Progress and Prosperity' (see Figure 7.1), hailing itself as 'the driving force for change', has been working hard to establish physical symbols commemorating its dedication to such goals. These symbols, however, are becoming ironic to many of Omaruru's inhabitants, and certainly, most long-term residents living in Hakahana, as the stagnation of economic opportunity within the town is contrasted with the superficial improvements of paved roads and newly-erected football stadiums.

Even when the people's interests are addressed, there is still a great reluctance to acknowledge the government as the benefactor. An example of this occurred when

electricity came to Hakahana. At the time, I assumed this would change the tone of people's sentiments as this action could easily be interpreted as an indication of the government's



**Figure 7.1. Swapo Emblem demonstrating its motto of 'Peace, Progress and Prosperity'**

willingness to make good on its promises, and to look out for the welfare of Hakahana's residents. Instead, at the time, a rumour began, which I encountered numerous times, that *I* was responsible for the light being brought to Hakahana. People were coming up on the streets of Hakahana and thanking me through my field assistant, and people began to call me over to interview them in hopes that their opinions would be heard. When I asked if they thought I was an employee of the Namibian government, they responded that they thought that maybe I was helping them through my own government.

Although I consistently denied credit for bringing light to Hakahana and would in fact inform people that it was the municipality who was responsible for this advancement, people would usually just nod their heads and say little else in response. In the end, the provision of lighting by the municipality appeared to do little to alter people's perceptions of their neglected status as inhabitants of Hakahana.

One additional factor in people's attitudes surrounding Hakahana's creation, not voiced directly by long-term residents, but observable through their concern with moving up and moving out of Hakahana, is the pre-existing conceptualisation of a hierarchy of space, as described in chapter 2. Valuations of space, as a result of the spatial division of races and classes during colonialism, have been standardised over time. These valuations continue to



be articulated in Omaruru today. For long-term residents, their confinement to Hakahana, not only involves their physical separation from the larger community of Ozondje, but also symbolises confinement to a lower class or status within Omaruru. Their exposure to ideas and rhetoric concerning the devaluation of Hakahana is a consequence of their lingering, significant links with the wider community. It appears that the awareness of a growing stigma associated with belonging to the settlement, and the desire to transcend their symbolic confines, often causes greater rejection of community within Hakahana and greater resistance to the larger power structures thought to be neglecting the concerns and interests of its inhabitants.

In all, the stories and rhetoric which surround the creation of Hakahana reveal the developing relations between the micro and macro levels of Namibian society, and the politics and practices involved in its transformation which is currently taking place. Through the direct involvement of the government in producing a separate locality out of what existed as an unbounded space, linked to an established wider community, political and social context was created that began to alter both relations within Hakahana, and relations between its residents and those of Ozondje. In the following section I examine aspects of the context created, and reflect on the further attempts of the government in reproducing locality that were observed during my fieldwork.

### **Reproducing Locality in Hakahana**

During approximately the first half of my fieldwork, before further efforts were undertaken by the municipality to organise Hakahana, the concerns and debates listed above remained largely within the realm of criticisms toward macro-level politics. Hakahana's residents were already slowly beginning to separate themselves into more ethnically homogenous sections, however, little was said that commented on micro-level divisions within the settlement. Only in the second half of my fieldwork did it become obvious that disgruntlement with macro-level politics was beginning to manifest itself in micro-level conflicts. The development of political tensions that emerged from October up until the elections in December, as described at the end of the previous chapter, contributed greatly to the mounting tension. However, before the anxiety of the upcoming election manifested

itself, attempts made to establish community within Hakahana were already beginning to produce an insider/outsider dichotomy and a rhetoric that was greatly altering the reproduction of the neighbourhood.

From April until August of 1999 I had the chance to take part in a process, initiated by the Omaruru municipality, of forming a residents' committee for Hakahana. Through participation in the many meetings that took place to elect representatives from each of Hakahana's three sections, and initial meetings to determine the problems and possibilities for Hakahana, I was able to witness, first-hand, interaction between municipality officials, Omaruru Town Council members, and the residents of Hakahana. These meetings revealed a great deal about the intentions of the municipality, the increasing anxiety about the situation created in Hakahana by both residents and officials, and the trial-and-error fashion with which most of the policies affecting Hakahana were being decided and implemented.

From the side of the municipality, the meetings and the committee formation were to be in the effort of creating community within Hakahana, and an interdependency amongst its residents. It was hoped that further solidarity would pressure people into paying monthly squatting fees of N\$14 (£1.40) and permit further development within the settlement to take place without additionally burdening municipal funds. As the deputy manager stated in his interview regarding the collection of monthly fees in Hakahana:

What we tried to do was, first send out the accounts and deliver them at each house, but that didn't work. Secondly, we tried to send out the municipal staff at the month's end and pay days so that they could collect the money door to door. That also didn't work. Now the [town] council assigned two counsellors to form a committee within the community that will sort of be employed by the municipality to collect and in return get the payment for that. Maybe they will start paying if their own people are involved in monitoring the money. Maybe it will sort of convince them to force people to pay. We want to use the Hakahana residents themselves to get rid of the people who won't pay...but the committee must work with the community and convince them that if they are paying the services [then] further development can come to their side. And if they believe that, because of those three guys we cannot receive this, then the community themselves can perhaps do the job of the municipality.

Only secondarily was it noted, in the first organisation meeting, that the creation of this committee would also establish a two-way means of communication between the municipality and the residents of Hakahana.

The first organisational meeting, held on April 8, 1999, brought forth many more concerns and comments from the councillors and the residents of Hakahana, but the intentions of the municipality, revealed in the quote above, were obviously prioritised on the meeting's agenda. The meeting took place at the Ozondje municipality building, but it was decided then that all further meetings would be under the tree at the entrance to Hakahana so that attendance would be higher. The meeting was conducted primarily in Afrikaans<sup>1</sup>, with some switching to English, however, during breaks, people reverted to home languages to communicate with those sitting immediately beside themselves. The following is an excerpt from my field notes that provides an account of who attended and what was discussed at that meeting:

Out of 9 residents of Hakahana present at the meeting, there were 2 male and 5 female Damara-speaking people, and 2 male Oshiwambo-speaking people. Others in attendance were Velia Kurtz and Mr. Goeseb, the two designated councillors, Paul, the ground manager of Hakahana, Albert [my field assistant] and myself. It was asked beforehand that I bring along a copy of the map I had been making as no such information existed elsewhere. Before the meeting, Paul took the map and photocopied it and distributed it to all those present. From this it was decided that there must be 6 representatives for section A, 2 for section B and 2 for section C. Paul voiced a concern, for fear of sounding racist, that the representatives from section C should be Oshiwambo-speaking as almost all who live in the C section are Owambo and they are often not able to communicate in other languages. The desire to hold an election for committee members was addressed by Mr. Goeseb, and the pseudo-employee status these representatives would have was brought to light by the comment that, 'if we see an improvement, then one who works more will get more money'. Problems presented by the councillors were: 1) exceedingly high rates of water usage, 2) people wanting too much, that the funds are not there, especially when people don't pay their monthly fees, and 3) Hakahana is getting too big. These ideas were presented without much discussion. One Oshiwambo-speaking man complained that the last time there was a committee formed for the initial creation of Hakahana, the members of the committee were by-passed and decisions were made by the municipality without their input and all agreed that that had indeed happened and should not happen again if possible. The topic was then shifted to the fact that there had to be a meeting to announce the upcoming elections and nominate people from Hakahana so that a committee could be formed to start addressing these problems. Councillor Goeseb put forth concerns that only people who have been paying their monthly fees and who have lived there for some time (unspecified) should be eligible to be representatives. It was decided that the meeting would take place on the

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<sup>1</sup> It was offered that the meeting could be conducted in English, but I declined so that all those present could better understand. By this time in my fieldwork my Afrikaans was sufficient enough to follow the topics proposed at the meeting, so language didn't provide a problem.

weekend (Saturday) under the tree at the entrance to Hakahana. The meeting was brought to a close with a prayer given in Damara by Mr. Goeseb.

From this meeting and the following meetings, it was evident that the greatest concern of the municipality was much as the deputy manager had indicated. Although other ideas were put forward, they were quickly dismissed and the discussion of the need to organise fee collection would resume. It was also apparent that there was greater Damara participation than there was from other groups. The concern Paul expressed that there be an Oshiwambo-speaking representative from section C, it was explained after the meeting, was indicative of the concern to ensure Owambo participation in the formation of the committee as they were seen as a more isolated population of Hakahana. This concern seems, in retrospect, to have foreshadowed the results of the elections and the establishment of the committee that were to come. However, his comments within the meeting only cryptically referred to possible challenges to the formation of a wider community, and seemed either understood and quickly disregarded, or simply not comprehended by the councillors.

The following meeting was also dominated by Damara attendance, although more Oshiwambo-speaking and Otjiherero-speaking people did attend. At that meeting, the nominations for the election of committee members was the only topic posed. When the councillors began to ask for nominees from the various sections, an older Damara man voiced the concern that dividing the sections and nominating people 'would turn into a kind of racism'. Complaints were also made about the use of Afrikaans as unfair practice and generally, the meeting assumed a chaotic character where little could be accomplished because of ongoing heckling from the crowd. In the end, the councillors announced that rather than take nominations that day, sections A, B, and C would meet individually in the week to follow and then nominate representatives from their own sections.

The third meeting and the ones that followed were disorganised events that usually led to the councillors assuming the role of leaders and putting forth suggestions which remained undecided upon due to people shouting mixed opinions at will. In all, a visible frustration and resignation on the part of the councillors and the failing ability to maintain order meant that most left these meetings with a feeling of disgruntlement, voicing sentiments which often alluded to prejudice or unfair decision making processes. And, in the end, the meetings did little to promote a feeling of shared democracy and participatory



governance, but rather, generally served as fuel to already heated debates about morality and politics. It was not difficult to see, from these proceedings, the challenges to democracy that were rooted in the lack of communal solidarity and a fundamental aversion to politics. As one Owambo informant aptly noted,

Here, to develop the community you must work hard because the people are not understanding the leaders. They say, "Ach, that is a politician saying something, saying what." Most of the different ethnicities, when you gather them and you talk to them about the development and the government, and tell them they must talk to the ruling party, they say, "No man, you are just an advocate for the politicians. We don't want to support the politicians". Those are the people who don't understand. They hinder the development. If you say, okay, we want you to demonstrate against the municipality to put the street lights in, then they say, "No, that is the politics".

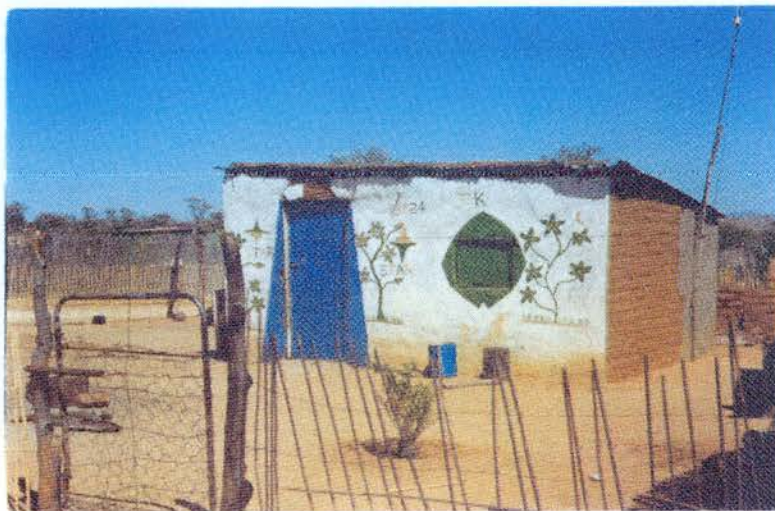
From the perspective of the municipality, Hakahana became an ever-greater source of anxiety. While the representatives were elected in the end, these developments did little to combat growing oppositions between Hakahana and the larger community of Ozondje, as stories circulated and negative conceptions of the settlement held within the location were further developed. As well, within the settlement, as Paul's concerns in the first meeting addressed, there were obvious linguistic and social boundaries within the settlement that governed the effectiveness of the given representatives to organise their respective sections of Hakahana and collect the fees solicited by the municipality.

One of the effects these meetings and the resulting establishment of a committee of representatives *did* seem to produce within Hakahana was increasing feelings of ownership by recent migrants and long-term residents alike. Although there was still a great deal of negativity surrounding long-term residents' placement in Hakahana, the meetings, along with the establishment of lighting in the settlement, appeared to spur the construction of greater numbers of permanent or semi-permanent structures and increased identity appropriation amongst the residents of Hakahana (see Figures 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4).

The interdependency, hoped for by the municipality, however, did not appear to amount from this strengthened identity. Rather, every day, walking the streets of Hakahana, I encountered more and more people who were swapping plots, paying substantial amounts of money to the existing occupants in order to place themselves in an area dominated by people of their own ethnic group. As well, there was greater conflict that took place between people of different ethnic groups and a growing articulation of dichotomies that existed



**Figure 7.2. Hakahana welcome monument erected in December, 1999 symbolising increased feelings of ownership within the settlement.**



**Figure 7.3. Semi-permanent structure in Hakahana with television aerial and generator.**



**Figure 7.4. More construction of permanent housing underway in Hakahana.**

between Owambo recent migrants and long-term residents. These comparisons commented not only on inherent differences in morality, but also on the effects of these differences on community life in Hakahana. Contrasts such as law abiding/engaging in criminal activity, not practising witchcraft/practising witchcraft, civilised urbanites/uncivilised rural people were often made and were thought to produce irreconcilable differences between the residents of Hakahana.

There *were* also dichotomies stated which *favoured* the cultural traits of recent migrants over the cultural traits of those within the central parts. Partly as a result of stereotypes developed during the apartheid era, migrants from the North were often characterised as good businessmen, whereas Damara citizens in particular acknowledged their weakness in managing businesses. As well, recent migrants were thought to be extremely hard working, in contrast to those who were from the central parts. Despite the complementary tone of these oppositions, these favourable dichotomies were still used as springing points for discussions which commented on the negative effects produced by the influx of migrants on the moral structure that existed in Omaruru prior to their arrival. For example, although recent migrants were thought to be good businessmen, the proliferation of *tombo* houses throughout Hakahana was thought to have negative social effects on the youths of other cultures. As Benz, a 44 year old Damara informant explained:

I am telling you now here in this country and in this here Omaruru, there is no more love. You come here always and you will see the young ladies who are on the street – more of them are Damara. You will see them at the shabeens. Young, young ones – drinking. This is happening more and more. You know the Owambo people, when they are making their *tombo*, they are not making it to get drunk, they are making it to sell it. We are the people who are going there and buying to get drunk. The Owambo people are also giving it to their little children, but they are not giving it to them to get drunk. It is like their tradition – their culture. But the young Damara people are the ones who are going to drink and get drunk. They are taking that from another culture and going with it in the wrong direction.

Although his statement is not blatant, and also suggests agency on the part of young Damara people, there is still, within his argument, the implication that the growing presence of this Owambo traditional drink and their willingness to give it to young children (to make business) is instrumental in the moral deterioration of Damara youths of Hakahana.



**Figures 7.5 and 7.6.**  
**Social life in Hakahana usually**  
**takes place at ‘*tombo* houses’**



His statement that there is ‘no more love’ in Omaruru or the country today introduces the translocal context in which his perceptions of the decline of community are formed. And his subsequent arguments about the influence of Owambo culture hint at the presumed source of both local and national corruption of a formerly existing system of values.

*Tombo* houses are also the source of other moral arguments about community as they are seen as sites of cross-ethnic interaction by Hakahana’s residents that produce increased violence and ethnic conflict within the settlement. Indeed the importance of the presence of *tombo* houses is great as they are scattered throughout Hakahana and significantly influence, if not constitute, social life within the neighbourhood. The drinking that takes place at *tombo* houses makes social interaction in these settings rather volatile and often stabbings or fights that take place are produced out of misunderstandings resulting from linguistic difference or pre-existing animosities.<sup>2</sup> Due to these occasions, they are seen to directly hinder good will between the people and to constitute a formidable obstacle to

<sup>2</sup> During my time in Hakahana I was witness to a few of these fights, most which ended in black and blue eyes, but one in which a knife was used to ward off an aggressor. Although these conflicts occur quite regularly in the setting of *tombo* houses, they are not exclusive to this context, but rather, occur as well in Ozondje with some regularity.



community. Their proliferation and the arrival of an increasing number of migrants from Namibia's North are considered directly correlated, and, hence, arguments that pose *tombo* houses as a source of corruption often easily parlay into discussions about the difficulty in establishing a feeling of 'community' in Hakahana.

Another example of a moral argument about community stemming from favourable stereotypes expressed about Owambo migrants is found in the way people speak of the hard-working nature of Oshiwambo-speaking migrants. In light of this stereotype, it was often noted that they, in turn, undermine the opportunities for people from the central parts to demand better salaries and more favourable working conditions. This was thought to occur as they constitute a readily available work force that is willing to accept sub-standard conditions and payment on jobs provided by white employers.

As a result of these varied interests and the varied social positionings of Hakahana's residents, the creation of a community that encompassed the whole of the settlement, encouraged through the government's aims and practices, was not able to be achieved. And generally, despite all the attempts made to persuade people to pay their fees, at the end of my fieldwork I was informed that little progress had been made through the municipality's efforts, and generally, from my perspective, Hakahana seemed more divided than ever before. In light of the pre-existing historical, economic and ideological differences among Hakahana's residents, addressed in the previous chapters, it is understandable how the production of locality, and the municipality's subsequent attempts to create interdependency and solidarity in the settlement, resulted, instead, in the production of greater difference. As people began to develop a sense of identity through locality, and subsequently began to challenge their confinement to the social status *inherent* in that identity, rhetoric concerning distinctions between Hakahana's residents was resultantly produced. What started, at Hakahana's production, as a context-driven challenge against the actions of the government, resulted, through its reproduction, in a context-generative struggle that increased micro level tensions within the settlement itself.

The implementation of a plan by the municipality to manage Hakahana through the development of community interdependence was fundamentally flawed through their failure to consider the divisive power of the existing differences within the neighbourhood. The municipality's struggle, however, is one that they do not face alone, as it is one inspired, not

only as a result of local or national contexts within Namibia, but one that finds its roots in problems of post-modernity that, world-wide, challenge the formation of community today.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue that an anthropology that considers this post-modern condition, and whose objects are no longer conceived as automatically and naturally anchored in space, needs to be particularly concerned with 'the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested and enforced' (ibid:18). The production of community within Hakahana entails all the particular problems that beleaguer neighbourhoods throughout the world today. In such post-modern situations, 'the task of producing locality (as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community) is increasingly a struggle' (Appadurai 1996:189).

The struggles of incorporating difference and creating community were ones not only faced and contained within Hakahana, rather, the polarisation of moralities within Hakahana based in cultural practices of migrants versus those of long-term residents also found its way into rhetoric within the wider community of Ozondje. This occurred as greater distinctions were made in people's concerns about Hakahana that referred to the large population of migrants contained therein as the source of their anxiety. Rather than acknowledging the larger number of long-term residents as constituting a great portion of the settlement's population, mention of Hakahana's inhabitants became synonymous with the mention of migrants, in conversations concerning and debating ideas about Omaruru's escalating crime rates and its moral decline. In this way, the context generated by the social production and reproduction of Hakahana not only shaped and divided the settlement internally, but also extended beyond its borders to influence and produce a wider social context that led to the further stigmatisation of Hakahana's inhabitants.

## **Conclusion**

Through the understandings provided herein, it becomes possible to comprehend the actions of my young 7<sup>th</sup> grade friend whose fear of entering Hakahana helped to inspire the contemplation that produced this chapter. The transformation of life in Omaruru and the loss of security and order that came with a more bounded community are effects that are being experienced by residents throughout Omaruru's various sections. The attempts of both the

people and the municipality to re-create a sense of order within the town have similar effects of social exclusion and spatial confinement that are, and have been, resisted by the long-term residents of Hakahana since the creation of the settlement. These processes, although they must be observed and documented through an examination of social and political interaction from a micro-level perspective, can only be fully comprehended through an analysis which considers the context-driven aspect of social formations which is often a result of State interaction.

Within the past decade, the need to investigate the production of difference that results from processes of State formation has been acknowledged, and substantial analysis has been undertaken (Williams 1991, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Verdery 1994, Appadurai 1996, Tonkin 1996, Alonso 1998). Through advancements in anthropology's understanding of the interconnections between micro and macro level practices and policies, further consideration has been given to the disjunction that is caused by and consequent of the relationship between these levels. The study of the production of locality that has resulted from these explorations is one which allows the ethnographer to analyse the practices and rhetoric that surround the creation (and resolution) of such disjunction as it derives from and creates contexts that extend *beyond* the local.

The observations contained in this chapter, and throughout this text, reveal a picture of Hakahana as a local neighbourhood, within larger local and national contexts, that is caught up in the transformation of social and political life occurring in Namibia today. The incidence of increased migration, the government's attempts to organise and make legible the landscapes within its borders, the restructuring of Namibia's economy, all of these factors play important roles in the creation of context within Hakahana, the larger community of Omaruru, and indeed, within Namibia as a nation.

## Conclusion

In August of 2000 I had the opportunity to return to Namibia for a conference held at the University of Namibia entitled, 'Public History, Forgotten History'. On the day the conference began, a Canadian academic, John Saul, presented a paper petitioning for the initiation of public discussion over what happened at Lubango, an Angolan town where hundreds of SWAPO liberation movement members, thought to be spies, were tortured and detained in prison camps in the 1980s by their own security personnel (Leys and Saul 1995). His criticism regarded the decision of the SWAPO government to refuse any public inquiry into what happened at Lubango, suggesting that in order for the nation to heal itself, the country must make amends with its past.

The arguments that ensued after Saul's presentation elucidated a division in the perceptions of history and memory held by western academics and those held by academics and statesmen and women of Namibia: one that, to a certain degree, determined the political parameters of the conference. This division was not based on understandings of the power of history and memory, but rather, concerned the methods by which a young nation deals with such a force. While western academics held strong opinions that history and memory must be defused by exposure and open discussion, Namibian government officials and academics perceived the peaceful transition of the country, still underway, as potentially threatened by any premature reckoning with its history.

On the third day of the conference I had my own personal encounter with these opinions of the State as I presented a paper entitled, 'History, Memory and the Politics of Identity' that was essentially a composite of ideas presented here in chapters five and six. In it I argued, much as I have here, for the importance of understanding Namibia's divided past, and, in turn, the varied imaginings and understandings of the world, amongst its citizens, that result. My paper was only subtly political as it attempted to bring to light the challenges to local and national 'community' that these differences brought about in Hakahana. However, it inspired responses from state officials present that brought it within the context of a political discussion. As state officials queried my ideas, they focussed their concern on my



discussion of Namibia's divided past and existing ethnic difference. I responded by arguing, once again the points presented in this thesis, that, despite the attempts people make towards 'unity in diversity', the historical experiences, and hence, memories, of my informants were varied and often led to the expression of divergent imaginings and understanding of the world. Although the statesman who questioned me had this response to my paper, young Namibians who sought me out later discussed what they perceived to be the validity of my ideas of the past and present, history and memory and issues of difference.

One young academic, a former youth from Katutura, Windhoek's black township, stated that it was only because of the different lifestyles and ambitions of those in power that they do not understand what it is like for ordinary Namibians in other situations. His comment illuminated for me the disjunction that most often occurs between ideology and lived experience, and spoke something of the need of a government to address that disjunction in order to maintain legitimacy and peace.

As leaders of Namibia's new state aim to create 'unity' out of the great 'diversity' that exists, decisions to permit the free discussion and acceptance of the various histories that memory produces and reproduces *is* potentially challenging. However, results from my research and fieldwork indicate that suppressing these histories is potentially far more divisive, as the transformist hegemony that develops and the silencing that occurs in the name of 'unity in diversity', often produces an effect contrary to its goal.

What I write here is not simply stated to criticise the government in its policies, for it was obvious that many of the decisions being made by the State during my fieldwork were most likely the products of attempts at good governance. However, in light of the concerns of some of the politicians present at the conference, much as was the case with the reproduction of *Hakahana*, it appears there is a lack of, and/or disregard for, understanding of micro-level politics and social realities that poses potential problems in state formation. It is imperative to recognise the symbiotic nature of the various levels of social and political life within the country. My post-fieldwork conference experience, which allowed me to engage with people at the macro level in Namibia, revealed that this issue, which is, perhaps, under-prioritised by the government is, therefore, a potential barrier to the successful establishment of the nation-state.

This thesis has been primarily concerned with evaluating this relationship between the micro- and macro-levels of Namibian society through an examination of contexts generated from their interpenetration. Through an examination of Hakahana as an ethnoscape being created and transformed through processes of migration, state formation and identity formation, this study explored the ways in which macro level political and historical factors and influences help to determine life on the micro level as it is created through people's attempts to make sense of the world around them. Concomitantly, it is argued that the macro level is also potentially affected by these processes as resistance to, and/or acceptance of, the ideologies and histories put forth by the state determine its legitimacy and effectiveness in governing its citizens. Throughout this analysis, the notion of transition has been highlighted in these processes as an influence which permeates nearly all aspects of life in Namibia today, and helps to determine the often volatile, always shifting, parameters of social and political realities.

During my visit to Namibia for the conference, I also had the opportunity to return to Omaruru, and, once again, spend some time in Hakahana. As always, the township felt like a place foreign to me upon my return. New faces were walking its pathways, new shops lined its streets, and many of the friends I knew had moved on for a while to another town or to a farm in search of employment or other means of livelihood. Hakahana itself had changed as well. It had grown even bigger, as greater numbers of squatters' homes pushed all the way back to within feet of the train tracks that now served as the new man-made barrier to the settlement. The only thing that remained consistent was the hopeless sentiments expressed by the residents.

There was also increased tension upon my return as the divide was reinforced between long-term residents and recent migrants by recent accusations that the owner of Hakahana's main Owambo-owned *cuca* shop, Shikongo's, was cheating Damara people who sent small children to fetch food items. Discussions of organising and confronting the owner or taking the owner to court for racist practices were buzzing around Hakahana, and only the most sympathetic people were suggesting that maybe the owner's maths were bad. The growing tensions, the expanding borders, and the continued division of Hakahana all lent to

the perception, once again, that transition and transformation were driving forces in the recreation of social life in the settlement.

There is much, however, that I was not able to observe upon my return visit, and much that is left to future research within the settlement's boundaries and beyond. For example, it would be valuable to be able to compare and contrast data collected from other 'reception areas' created around the same time within other central and eastern Namibian townships. With this information it would be possible to explore how varied dynamics between the local leaders and people of the settlement, or other such determinants, produced different or similar attitudes and contexts. It would also be beneficial to accumulate extensive data from other areas of Omaruru to better determine the degree to which these phenomena observed are a product of social, political, historical, and/or economic factors limited to Hakahana, or to what degree they are more widespread throughout the township. My observations, through participation in daily life in Omaruru, suggest that class is an extremely influential determinant, as the ability to make a living is tied up in a whole system of social and personal values experienced by people in different ways. However, this could be better substantiated through extensive data accumulation in Omaruru's other sections.

In all, however, while most findings contained in this study pertain to the creation and recreation of contexts specifically within Hakahana, beyond the conclusions of local politics or practices, this thesis explores processes occurring throughout Namibia as 'unity in diversity' is pursued and initial attempts are being made to unite the various peoples of Namibia, not only under a common national identity and a common nation-state, but within common neighbourhoods, to borrow Brackett Williams' phrase, 'within the pot of physical proximity' (1991b:31).

The findings contained in this thesis are not limited to social analysis within Namibia, but contain ethnographic analysis which contributes to a growing knowledge of the effects of processes undertaken in the formation of new states and the phenomenon of identity appropriation. It examines how the attempts by the state to create homogeneity from abounding historical, economic and cultural difference can often result in the production of greater difference.

It also provides, through case study analysis, an understanding of the various motives of migration found in Namibia today, and the patterns such movement is producing in both source and destination areas. Such evaluation is greatly valuable in understanding the continued causes and effects of migration as post-Independence mobility continues to alter the social and political landscapes of Namibia's urban locales. The examination of processes of transformation provides meaningful synthesis of data from the micro, median and macro, which help to illuminate the historical, social, economic and cultural factors that are transforming Namibia's young nation, and that pose challenges to its motto of 'unity in diversity'. An awareness and desire to address these critical issues can help to strengthen the government's claim to this end.



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## Appendix A

### Survey used in Hakahana and Ozondje

House # \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Names \_\_\_\_\_

Languages Spoken (in order of proficiency) \_\_\_\_\_ (Rank in use) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: Married \_\_\_\_\_ Single \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_\_ Living together \_\_\_\_\_

Language group of marital partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Language spoken in the home: \_\_\_\_\_

HouseComposition: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any other family in Omaruru? Where do they live? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived in Omaruru? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have they lived in Omaruru? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you live before? \_\_\_\_\_

When you came to Omaruru, who did you know? Who helped you get settled?

What brought you to Omaruru?

Do you spend your entire year in Omaruru, or part elsewhere? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you consider 'home' to be? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children? \_\_\_\_\_ How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Ages? \_\_\_\_\_

If of school age, which schools do they attend? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you (and/or your partner) employed? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, where? What is/are your job title(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

If not employed, where does your support come from? Govt. Pension: \_\_\_\_\_ Own  
Business: Farming: \_\_\_\_\_ Gardening: \_\_\_\_\_ Livestock: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Where does your food come from?

Do you engage in trade with anyone else in Omaruru? Hakahana? \_\_\_\_\_

When you buy food, which shops do you go to?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which organizations do you belong to? (Church, School, Ethnic, Political?)

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you go to socialize?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you like living in Hakahana?

Negatives: \_\_\_\_\_ Positives: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B

### Damara King, Hage Geingob's Speech at Damara Cultural Festival in Okombahe, November 13, 1999

A human being is someone who has a fundamental place through which he views things historically. A person with no history through which he can be understood is not a person. Today I say that if next year's cultural festival of the Damaras will be held again and there is a child coming here to this festival, he must come with his parents. If ever person or parent who has come to this festival was closer to any kid, and kept him beside him and showed him, the person speaking there is your what, and those people who sit down there are this lady and that man, then this crap that is happening with the kids right now won't be happening anymore. Then there would be respect.

Sometimes, my fellow brothers, you take kids to funerals too. Now aim now for next year, if you are going to a funeral or a festival next year, keep your children closer to you and teach them not to hang freely around because they just mess things up. A kid taken by his parents to bury someone, he is not burying someone himself, the adult is the one who shows him what to do. Then they know what to do in the future. How could a kid stand in front and go and take the dirt and want himself to throw in the dirt himself at the graveyard? A kid is usually held by his parents and given that little dirt and shown by his parents what to do, to throw it there or do what. Those are the things that we have to take care of. Those are the things that are spoiling our name. Just look right there, there is one jumping in that window. If he were closer to his parent then he shouldn't have done that at all. To come to places like this place, these festivals, these are places we have to keep our children close to us so that they know why we are here.

Why I say that is that sometimes we leave the kids on their own and they become street kids, they become thieves, they become killers. But we turn back later to the kids and point at them with a sharp finger. There was a child who became a thief and a killer and he killed someone one time and was sentenced to death. So he went ahead and said, 'Before I will be hanged, I want to see my mom for the last time'. And she was brought over and she came and he said, 'Mama, I want to kiss you for the last time because I won't live anymore'. And she came closer with a big heart, it's my son I will never see him again, and the minute she got closer he bit her lip off and said, 'If you would have taught me in the beginning when I was a kid, then I shouldn't have stood here today'. The former speaker woman has asked here, 'How long will we have such negative competition between us, we who are the mothers of the killers, we who are the mothers of the thieves? We who are the mothers of the criminals? Now, the men must also sit closer to the women so that we know that if we are coming to a place like this we are coming to a great historical place that means something to our ancestors. The man should sit closer to the woman and in the middle should be the child so that the parents can both explain everything that is going on here at this festival.

Ladies and Gentlemen, whether you want or not we must draw a line. And we must start behind the line that we have put down – start with a new walk. In the previous papers that have passed by there has been written that the Damara nation are drinkers, they are pot smokers, they don't have a real life, they are just living a messed-up life. That is what they wrote about us. Will we hand that over so that they can do the same after we have drawn the line? No. From now on we must start to clean up our name. So by that I say that that line

that we draw down there, the people who don't want to go along with what they are talking about us can cross over the line. The ones that are not ready yet or able yet, they can stay behind and get themselves ready first. And if they see that they have gotten themselves ready, then they can come over the line. Through this whole story I was just telling you to try to build up our Damara nation and to clean up our name that the other people are misusing and talking badly about us so that they won't get a chance again to disgrace our name.

This nation is a beautiful nation. That's why all the nations love them. It's a smart nation, it is full of clever people. That's why they usually stand in front of the other people. It is a lovely nation. It is a lovely nation. That's why they take in all kinds of other people and make them their people. They are goodhearted. That's why. They don't think about themselves, but think mostly about other people. But now the time has come when we, the ones who usually clean the other people's houses (by the way there is no one who will clean for us) but I think the time has come for us to clean our own homes. It will be a big loss for all the people here in Namibia if the fire of the Damara people will die out. The groups that are standing today high and strong with kill one another and fight one another and we will be the ones who will be able to stop the fight. May God bless the Damara people. This horrible sickness that is killing out the nation today which we know that we are trying to save ourselves from, but we can't. So may God stand for us there and help us out with this horrible sickness that is notorious today.

## Appendix C

### Municipality Interview March 25, 1999

T: Can we just begin by each of you stating your name and what position you hold at the municipality

MR: Meneer Roberts, Technical manager of the Omaruru Municipality

X: Meneer Xoagub, Deputy Officer of the Municipality

T: Can you explain the process through which it was decided to move the former squatters camps to Hakahana? What were some of the reasons behind it? Whose decision was it? Where did the idea come from?

X: The idea came out of the council of the Omaruru Municipality. One reason: it was a little unattractive for us to have the squatters' camp where one enters the township. Secondly, it was unorganised. There were no plots set out for individual houses. After that we identified a specific area to where the people must move.

T: They must move, yes?

X: It was not a matter of must move. We in fact thought that services must be provided but in an unorganised set up it was difficult for us to provide the most needed services such as water and sewage. So that was the main idea behind the move. After the council's decision we contacted the community license officer who is Mr. Tjongua. As to sensitise and also help us in persuading the people to undertake such a move. We conducted several meetings in fact it was not by force, but we promised certain services that they will enjoy if they agree to move.

T: Such as?

X: Water. There was no provision for water. No streets were provided. And those are most needed services a human being should enjoy. That was the background. After numerous meetings they in fact agreed to move.

T: Who agreed?

X: The community themselves.

T: These meetings were held where? At the squatter's camps?

X: No, most were held at the Ozondje municipality office, outside. We established a squatter's committee from the squatting community – their own people...

T: How was that done?

X: We told them that it would be much easier if we communicate through a committee. They elected the committee themselves and we used to contact the committee. Also we had meetings after meetings after meetings. In the beginning they didn't want to move.

T: Do you remember the date when it was decided to begin talking to the squatters?

X: It was in 1997 maybe February I think. And the move started in October.

T: And so it had been decided by the committee then...or it had been decided by the people?

X: It was decided by the people.

T: It was an actual person per person vote?

X: What happened in fact was, they refused to move and later on we surrendered our intentions. And we said, alright, if you want to stay here, fine. We're not going to bulldoze you from this spot. And all of the sudden the request came from them 'No we want to move, can you help with transport and those type of logistics. And we said, alright, that was our main intention, so we will help out with any logistics. And the Katutura, or the move started.

- T: Now, Hakahana as a name, is that a name that was informally given along the way or was that a decided name?
- X: You know, I will believe that that may be an informal name, but people, I mean if someone starts calling a name, those who are hearing, they simply assume that this is maybe the name that we should use. There is a township Hakahana in Windhoek
- T: That's why I was asking. Because naming this relocated squatter's camp Hakahana, it seems like the name would have some kind of connotation. Indicating the feelings of the people being moved...
- X: But it didn't come from us...
- T: So that was decided on by the people?
- X: Yes.
- T: When the people decided they did want to move, was that a decision made by the people or the appointed council? Who petitioned you? Who came to you?
- X: The committee was normally advocating what the council was wanting to do and so the committee was declared to be made of puppets that they were just moving in the footsteps of the council. You are trying to be nice guys to the council and so it was dismantled in the process. And the prominent figures within the squatting community came out, maybe, and started to talk within the squatting community and they came as people sent by the squatting community.
- T: So is there still a specific committee that represents Hakahana?
- X: Yes, it is supposed to be in existence. I don't know whether it is still operational.
- T: And this committee is supposed to correspond with you if they have concerns...
- X: Yes.
- T: Were the people involved in designing Hakahana or was that somebody brought in from outside?
- X: No they were not. There was no structure in existence. And after the squatter's committee was dismantled, we asked the technical dept. of the municipality to draw up a sort of map.
- T: And how much was that map adhered to in developing it?
- X: Yeah, but the squatter's community was not involved in that process.
- T: So when it finally came time to move the people, was transport provided? I heard from the people that there were some instances of people not wanting to move and bulldozers showing up to move them.
- X: I will start by saying that we don't even have a bulldozer. So it's void of any truth. Obviously some members of that community were in fact criminals but they wanted to hide within that community. They didn't want an organised structure because then the people would identify them. Even the police were looking for them. So those were the people who were instigating the people not to move and used their reasons not to move. Now the elder people came out and said NO we want to do business.
- T: And at the time the squatter's camps were in existence up here, was there a process of billing people for occupying that land? Were they ever charged money for their plots there?
- X: Yes, you know they located themselves on a proclaimed erven to be sold, so we decided that we needed that erven. Anyone can still buy that erven and we can not waste our money. You know it's money involved.
- T: and so they were charged...

- X: They were not charged. No charges were made on the grounds that they were occupying and erf. But every squatter's house was charged 14 dollars per month.
- T: So that fee hasn't changed and now they get unlimited water.
- X: Unlimited water and more services.
- T: So you would say that no force was used in moving the people.
- X: No force was used. In fact we can not force them. We don't have that power to do so...
- T: I mean, legally you could have forced them?
- X: Yes we could, but the council regarded that as a political move. You know people believe that those are electorates and we can not...
- T: You wanted it to be a peaceful transition. I see.
- T: So did you provide transport? Was one given day proclaimed when the people would move?
- X: You know we used to transport from half past five Just after the working hours and even through the weekend.
- T: So this went on for how long?
- X: It was a long process. We still have squatters that need to be transferred to Hakahana. The process hasn't been finished yet.
- T: But the majority of the people had moved in what time span?
- X: 3-4 months. Because we could not force them by saying you should now move. We made transport available and those who were ready to move made use of our services.
- T: In concept, what was the purpose of Hakahana as a development? You already explained that you wanted to improve the lives of the people, but was it for permanent residence, temporary residence, do you expect those people to live there long term and start a building project or something like that, or are you expecting them to live there for a couple of years and then relocated at a different area?
- X: The intention of a reception area like Hakahana is that you squat there until you get you enough money to build a house. Then you move into the community. So, for that reason the area will be permanent, but we do not expect that those people living in that area will be permanently settled on that area.
- T: Are they allowed to purchase a plot or are they only allowed to rent it monthly?
- X: Yes, it is not proclaimed erf area. We, as I said, drew the map up ourselves. It is not registered in the deeds office. And, as a result, people can only rent a plot.
- T: Speaking realistically though, how many people do you think will be able to relocate themselves from there into permanent homes? Because, I've done a survey, a pretty widespread survey of Hakahana and we're looking at serious unemployment within Hakahana. So, I'm just wondering how that could be expected of people maybe feeding 10 people off of one income.
- X: Yeah, that was the original idea of all the reception areas throughout Namibia. In central and Eastern Namibia that is the practice. The North is not that developed yet. But, realistically speaking you find squatters working for the municipality. They get their housing allowance through the housing scheme of the municipality. They can build a house and they will be subsidised by the municipality, but they don't want to make use of that option. You find a lot of people that has left his house. he was the original lessee of that house, or he owned it, but he is leasing it out to make money and goes to squat. You know, that man is out to make money. He is quite happy. It's for him much cheaper to stay there. He wants to stay there. You cannot force him to come back.
- T: Will those people be able to keep squatting there?



- X: Yes. Indefinitely. There is no plan to put a time limit or those kind of restrictions on staying in Hakahana.
- T: I know that you are making electricity available in the form of street lights. Now will electricity be available to the people individually? Could they buy a box?
- X: We discussed that, but up until now we don't have the co-operation of the squatting community. They are not co-operating in the sense that they don't want to pay even for the water. Even that 14 dollars, you know, they cannot afford. Or some can afford but they refuse to pay. And it would be very foolish of the council to bring electricity to the houses. It would be very stupid from the council's side because someone has to pay. If the squatters will not pay the rest of the community will subsidise them and it cannot work.
- T: What percentage of the people there would you say pay on a monthly basis for the plot they're using?
- X: Thirty to forty percent, I mean thirty to thirty-five percent are paying.
- T: Are there any plans to meter water usage?
- X: Yes it is metered now. The amount of water we are supplying to Hakahana is metered. The water is also included in the 14 dollars.
- T: Is that not causing some problems in terms of water availability? Everybody has a garden and that's said to be now the greenest part of Omaruru. So are there any plans to individually meter water usage?
- X: Yeah, we will definitely look at that matter very seriously. In fact the council will decide if the water will be metered individually or if the water will be available during certain limited hours so as to combat the wasting of water.
- T: How does that work? If somebody in the A section uses too much water, then does the C section suffer from them using too much water? Because what we noticed in surveying is that there are certain areas that where there will be great complaints about the availability of water, where other sections report that water availability is fine.
- X: Yes, we're also complaining. Everybody's complaining.
- T: Is it Hakahana as a whole or is there a certain amount for each section and when it's used up then it shuts off? How does that work?
- MR: There are two pipelines for all of Hakahana.
- X: It's maybe that if the plot is on a certain slope there will be problems with getting water.
- T: What are some of the problems that have come with the development of Hakahana? What are the new problems that the municipality is dealing with now that they weren't dealing with when it was just the squatter's camps?
- X: The amount of squatters has drastically increased. It's kind of encouraging people to squat because the services are there. It costs you nothing. As a result the crime rate within the squatting community also increased.
- T: Only within the squatting community?
- X: Yes within the squatting community.
- T: And crime in the outside community as well? Do you think that's on the increase?
- X: It was already there in the outside community, but we normally were not used to crime within the squatting community. But now you find that people are killing each other and stabbing each other.
- T: So you're talking about physical assault. You're not talking about stealing...
- X: Yes. It's the stabbings and killings that are on the increase.
- T: Are there provisions being made to make sure that those numbers are reduced?

- X: Yes, as far as that part is concerned I think the police will most probably think we are interfering in their business. So we will leave that up to them.
- T: Are you hoping that the lighting will decrease some of the crime?
- X: Yes, it definitely will.
- T: And was that one of the reasons that lighting was seen as so important?
- X: Yes. It was always in the plans, but those services could have come much sooner and more easily if the people were willing to contribute to that. In terms of paying their fees. We are finding it very hard to provide the services that we originally wanted to provide.
- T: Are there any benefits that are seen by having Hakahana as a development?
- X: Yeah, at least now we can deliver or spread our accounts to those people. Previously the majority of the squatter's houses were not registered. And, if you came to inquire who is staying here, nobody knew. Now they have their numbers and we can easily locate someone if we are in a hunt.
- T: How did people used to get water before?
- X: They used to get it from the township. Especially from the municipality office.
- T: So has water usage increased greatly?
- X: Yes, greatly. Greatly. It's now at about 6,200 meters. It has increased by about 70%.
- T: Is development in Hakahana hard to monitor? Are the people adhering to the rules set by the municipality or do you find that some of them are doing their own thing in terms of plot size, etc.
- MR: They obey the rules set by the municipality until now. We haven't experienced any problems with that up until now.
- T: What means do you use to collect the monthly fees? Is there any threat of eviction because the person hasn't paid in such a long time?
- X: What we tried to do was, first send out the accounts and deliver them at each house, but that didn't work. Secondly we tried to send out the municipal staff at the month's end and pay days so that they could collect the money door to door. That also didn't work. Now the council assigned two counsellors to form a committee within the community that will sort of be employed by the municipality to collect and in return get the payment for that. Maybe they will start paying if their own people are involved in monitoring the money. Maybe it will sort of convince them to force people to pay. We want to use the Hakahana residents themselves to get rid of the people who won't pay.
- T: So then it would become the responsibility of the person who was hired to collect the money to evict that person if they refuse.
- X: Yes, but the committee must work with the community and convince them that if they are paying the services and further development can come to their side. And if they believe that, because of those three guys we cannot receive this, then the community themselves can perhaps do the job for the municipality.
- T: And realistically, what percentage of the people are you hoping will pay in the end? Are you aiming for 100%?
- X: No. That is not possible, we know. But at least if we hit the target of 60% we can continue with development without financially hindering other members of the community.
- T: Where did the initial funding come from for the development of Hakahana? Was that from this individual municipality or from the regional or national government?
- X: The council decided, in fact, to use their own internal funds. We made an internal loan. A loan that is still to be repaid.

- T: The local council whose money comes from where?
- X: The tax payers. But it's only from the local community. We didn't receive any assistance from the national government.
- T: Did resettlement in Hakahana bring any improved legal status to the residents of the former squatter's camp? Can they now enrol their children in schools where they couldn't before,... are there any legal benefits to having your own plot and being registered with the municipality?
- X: That is not the prerequisite of any school. You can stay in the bush and still enrol your child at any school. And, I think, staying in Hakahana did not contribute to enrolling any child.
- T: And voting rights?
- X: You can vote as long as you are a Namibian human being. All you need is an identity card.
- T: So really nothing has changed legally in terms of their status.
- X: No, nothing has changed.
- T: The planning of Hakahana, was any consideration given to integrating or separating people of different ethnicities.
- X: No, absolutely none.
- T: Okay, so the fact that the C section is almost completely Owambo is just a coincidence.
- X: Yes, you know it was open for anyone to choose any plot. It's completely their own choice. They were not placed anywhere.
- T: And all the plots are priced equally?
- X: Yes.
- T: So why would somebody, say if one was available in the main section why would they choose to located themselves farther back in say the C area or B area?
- X: Yes, some people decided very late to move. Those people didn't have a choice, and they had to take what was available. The reason why people are sort of Owambos or Damaras is, it's sort of the traditions. And if someone know 'Oh, who's staying there? Oh, it's an Owambo' Then they will not stay there. They will rather opt for another side where more Damaras are staying.
- T: Have you experienced a lot of that in terms of when people come to register for plots they're asking which ethnicity lives around that area?
- X: That was not the case with registration. But if they go to the spot itself there they will find out these two numbers are Owambos or Damaras or Hereros. Then they will swap their erven with another that is another Herero, Damara or Owambo.
- T: So then they're separating themselves somewhat.
- X: Yes.
- T: Are you aware of any similar projects like Hakahana that are being carried out in townships in this region or any other in Namibia?
- X: Yes, it is happening throughout Namibia, but it is not all the towns that have already succeeded in that. Minority towns are still faced with the problem of an unorganised squatting community. They can not persuade people to go to an area where the council wishes them to be.
- T: And would you say that Omaruru is encouraging people to move here by creating Hakahana? Do you think that there are any particular factors in the surrounding area that would draw someone to a place like Omaruru? Are there any particular things that are

happening in Namibia today that are causing people to want to move to an area like Omaruru?

- X: People of squatting communities are normally attracted to a specific town by development. If your town does not have a community of squatters, then you should know that you are going down the drain. There is nothing going on in that town. People are coming to squat in the hope of finding a job in the future. So people will not go to any town where there is nothing going on. Like Usakos. Usakos will boast that they don't have a squatting community, but ask them 'what is going on in your town', there's absolutely nothing. Therefore you will find more squatters in Windhoek than you will in Okahandja and there it comes down and mostly the potential job opportunities are the determining factors in attracting or regulating the squatters.
- T: And do you think that this is a reality or an illusion that Omaruru is a place where there is a wealth of opportunities to find a job?
- X: There you will find different types of squatters. You find local squatters. Those are born and bred here in Omaruru. And because of their children who have grown up, they leave the houses for the children and they are opting to squat. Those people are just looking for a shelter. Then you find the others who are travelling. The majority of Omaruru squatters are born and bred here.
- T: Do you think there are particular reasons why people are coming from reserve areas to Omaruru now?
- X: One reason may be that their families are maybe working in Omaruru. So, in order to have a living, have drinking water, you come to stay here rather than to work here. If you are young you go to school through your family member.
- T: Has any recent statistics been accumulated for Hakahana?
- X: No. We don't have recent statistics. We can only say that those that have been registered themselves are supposed to be there.
- T: Are there any plans to limit people coming into Omaruru? Plans to say 'this is all we can hold. There are not enough resources past this point...'
- X: Yes, that is the idea. To sort of limit the amount of houses or erven. We already discussed that. We asked the technical department to demarcate the only areas to be used and beyond that we cannot allow any more.
- T: Okay, what will happen if say someone comes in and they can no longer get a plot in Hakahana and they begin squatting in the old squatter's camp? Are there plans to monitor that now?
- X: Yes, that can be easily monitored now because there are no houses there and as soon as one pops up we will immediately see that one and by force, we will maybe hire a bulldozer from Okombahe and bulldoze them. Because it's only one or two houses. That cannot create that problem.
- T: I wouldn't want to be in your position because I can hear what they're going to say then, 'this is a free Namibia, we're allowed to move around and the municipality of Omaruru is doing this.' I can hear it now what people would say.
- X: There are rules within the new or independent Namibia. We also took this story up with the president on his official visit to Omaruru and he said as long as you create services on the other side, you can bulldoze them. I will even assist you in doing that. That was his words. But we didn't go that far. But he was also not meaning literally, you know. But, there are rules within a free Namibia so we will use the rules.
- T: So will a town be able to say 'there's no more space here for in-comers'.



- X: Yes, if there is no more space for them they will continue to go to the next town. They are not coming to Omaruru because Omaruru has businesses or whatever. No, they just want to be in a town. I mean from where they can operate.
- T: I read a commentary in the newspaper that said that Omaruru was basically turning into a ghost town, which is obviously an exaggerated statement, but he was commenting on how the factories were closing down and all. Do you think that Omaruru itself is on the decline in terms of job availability and things like that? Or do you think it's economy is just shifting?
- X: I will say the possibilities have stagnated to a certain extent. A certain portion of people have lost their jobs. But as from there, as far as development or job opportunities are concerned, it has stagnated. That is the disadvantage of being here.
- T: But do you know of any plans to bring more business to Omaruru?
- X: You know I don't want to talk about possible opportunities or plans that are underway or in the pipeline. There are numerous possibilities that Omaruru can get businesses and development, but you cannot tell and say that this will definitely come. You will receive numerous applications for industrial erven but it never pans out. And it would be premature from my side to say that it will definitely happen. But talk is there. We are negotiating with the development centers. But we have done what we can do. And we are planning to convene a business conference to bring new business to the area. Industry.
- T: Is there anything else that either one of you would like to add?
- X: No, I think we will stop there.
- T: Thank you very much.